

# THE REDEMPTION PLAN OF GOD



*Sundara Rao Tsappidi*



To write a book especially in English one needs inspiration and invisible guidance. In the same way to deal with some incidents in the Bible, we need the divine inspiration and the Holy Spirit. Without God's guidance, and rather permission, we cannot write even a single word about Him. It is said about 40 inspired people wrote "The Holy Bible" in a period of 1600 years starting with Moses and ending with St. John and the last book being "The Book of revelation" that John wrote in 95 A.D. This book is very important because, it dealt with the life History of Jesus Christ. Some scholars called it "The Book of Seven and also fifth Gospel".

All the Biblical writers like Moses David Peter, John and Paul wrote their respective books only with divine inspiration. I somehow managed to complete the fourth book with countless blessings of God. As I dealt with the topics connected to the Bible History, some people may find interest to look into these topics and may God bless them and enlighten them.

**Sundara Rao Ts.**  
Author

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By  
**Sundara Rao Tsappidi**

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Sundara Rao Ts.

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(C) The author

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# United Evangelical Christian Fellowship

## Foreword

We rejoice in the Lord as Mr. Sundara Rao Tsappidi brings one more book to the series of Christian book publications. We praise God for his zeal, commitment and dedication to bring new articles with the knowledge of historic events gained by studying many books and visiting Israel and Turkey in person.



We marvel at his steadfast dedication and increased faith even with 60% eye sight while sustaining the pain of losing a beloved son in the family, he is bringing this fourth book to the believers of Christ. His previous books 'The Legacy of God's People & The Holy Land Tour', 'Quest for the Living God' and 'Offsprings from the Tabernacle' touched so many people world wide through the book publications and also published online at [www.uecf.net](http://www.uecf.net).

We praise God for the love and encouragement he receives from his dear wife Mrs. Grace Vijaya who is a humble servant of God and a virtuous woman who composed the testimonies of so many living witnesses of Christian believers through her many books.

It's our prayer that God will richly bless his family and use him in the expansion of His kingdom.

Best Regards,

Joshua(Phani) Pilli,

President, United Evangelical Christian Fellowship(UECF)

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## INTRODUCTION



In the series of books I have written so far this is the fourth one with the title “Redemption plan of God.” The first one is “Legacy of Gods People”. Second one is “Quest for the Living God” and the third one is “Off springs from the Tabernacle.” The fourth book I am going to pen is with some historical facts connected to the Bible. Then regarding collection of material I depended upon the books that I have been receiving from the library for the blind in large print in New Jersey USA and to some extent upon the writers who have been the regular contributors to the monthly magazine called “Zion’s Fire” and the names of those writers I already mentioned in my previous books.

I am thankful to all of them individually for their zeal to spread the word of God to the unknown and unreached in the world. And now I have been walking on their footprints for the same purpose as one of the laborers in Gods vine yard. I had to face some ups and downs regarding my health while preparing for this book because of my old age. But still God is protecting and guiding me in my venture to contribute what I could for the spreading of His word as far as possible and reap the harvest. Whoever is interested to look into my books they are welcome. My books can be seen in the computer through internet Pdf file. May God bless them abundantly. I am immensely thankful to our omnipotent God for giving me this gift of writing and I wish to glorify Him whole heartedly.

Thanking you

Yours in Christ

SUNDAR RAO T S

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## THE THREE HEAVENS

The blessed hope of the church is the second coming of Christ. (Titus 2:13)

The 21<sup>st</sup> chapter of the book of Revelation is very important for we must sincerely respect the “Divine” author, St John, to grant all readers of that chapter - special wisdom and enlightenment, to comprehend his message to the best of our ability. And, the young readers and believers in the faith need not be disappointed or dismayed if they fail truly and positively comprehend and understand this message of John. I strongly believe that for our teachings, preachings and writings, we all honestly require spiritual guidance.

It is undoubtedly the wrath of God but not the persecution of anti-Christ from which Israel would be delivered. The day of The Lord will come for a short period of time. And during that short time, the seven trumpets would be blown and seven bowls, would be poured out while interpreting the importance of the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter from the Book of Revelation. We may find different views or opinions as many of the Bible readers do. At the same time we must remember the valuable saying “Do not rush in, where angles fear to tread”.

St John wrote this chapter with the following words. “Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband” (Revelation21:1-2).

Keeping in mind, “Noah’s flood” where the waters rose high above the tallest mountains on the earth, we may not have observed such events in our practical life to compare with Noah’s deluge. But to think in terms of new heavens and new earth, we must dramatically elevate our understanding correctly. Therefore, with strong belief, we require strong and unfailing faith in God and His Word, and our faith should grow similar to a little sapling evolving into a mighty oak tree.

According to statements of many reputable scientists, the heavens are infinite. As there is no beginning, there is no end, border or termination point. These scientists sometimes spoke about three heavens:

**1) Atmospheric Heaven:** Where the birds fly above the earth.

**2) Terrestrial Heaven:** Where the heavenly bodies, the Sun, Moon, Stars, and the nine planets perform their respective duties. Regarding our planet Earth, it is massive in its dimensions, with a circumference of 24,902 miles and 7,926 miles in diameter at the equator.

**3) Celestial Heaven:** It is the throne of God.

God, who created heaven and earth and everything therein, if so chose to destroy them, He can do so in no time, with a simple word from His mouth. It may not be His intention to wipe out His own creation however. What John saw in his vision would be brought into existence following the passing away of the existing heaven and earth. We cannot say whether God wants to destroy the existing heaven and earth, and recreate new heaven and earth or renovate the present ones. We cannot comprehend with our limited knowledge and understanding, of what God has in His mind.

We can believe that the new heaven and new earth John saw were not necessarily new with regard to their origin, but with respect to their quality. This is to say that John was beholding the present heaven and earth completely cleansed and totally regenerated, and with all that they became absolutely perfect. John was beholding the heavens and the earth in all their pristine beauty as Adam and Eve saw in the “Garden of Eden” before the advent of sin and its consequential curse upon the entire creation.

In the Greek Bible, there are 2 words used for the word “new” - “Neos” and “Kainos”. So when the Bible speaks about the new wine, it seeks the word “Neos” about this year’s crop, new in regard to time. The second word “Kainos” is used in case of substance and quality superior to the old one. The Lord proposed a new (Kainos) covenant far superior in quality to the previous covenant of Moses. (1Corinthians 11:25, 2 Corinthians 3:6, Hebrews 8:8).

Apostle Paul also clearly explained that a believer of Christ was a new (Kainos) creation. For the purpose of clarity, the believer was the same person as he was before he became a believer. But after his change, he became qualitatively superior to what he was in his un-generated condition in Adam. He was called born again and thus a new creation.

When John spoke about new heavens and earth in his vision, he used the word “Kainos” and emphasized quality of the new heavens and earth, not in time or origin. John clearly pointed out that it was not the same heavens and earth, but cleansed and regenerated from the consequences of “Sin”. They were qualitatively superior to the old one’s, and thus the old one’s were to be purged. During the “Day of The Lord” when the Master’s hand passes towards both of them, they became the new heavens and earth.

Dr Henry Morris, a popular commentator in his work, “The Revelation Record” commented on Revelation 21:1 stating that - “The new cosmos (world) is not a novel cosmos, but a renewed cosmos(world). It is similar to the old one except that all its aging ravages of decay have been expunged, and it is fresh and new again”.

According to this wonderful statement, the present heavens and earth are not blotted out, or swift away into nothingness; but retouched, changed, renovated, cleansed, brightened up and regenerated from all their disorders and imperfections.

Joseph Seiss, another noted commentator pointed out on Revelation in a more classic manner. The words he used while describing new heavens and new earth are more wonderful that they would fill our minds with inspiration. Although his words were more than a hundred years old, they were talked about continuously with eloquence and considerable insight.

Therefore this regeneration of the earth is no longer in proper position because it is under the curse of Sin. An earth which needs no more to be torn with hooks and iron instruments, used for yielding fruits on earth, where thorns

and thistles no longer infest the ground. There will be no serpents to hiss among the flowers, and earth whose soil is never moist with tears or saturated with human blood. An earth, whose fields are never subjected to unprofitable seasons, whose atmosphere never gives wings to the seeds of plague and death. Whose ways and means are never linked with funeral processions or trodden upon with armed men on their way to war, an earth whose hills ever flow with salvation and whose valleys know only the sweetness of Jehovah's smiles. An earth from end to end and from center, to utmost Virge, clothed with the eternal blessedness of paradise restored.

All of nature awaits that day with anticipation, so that it may be freed from the curse of sin (Romans 8:19-22). Apostle Paul probably in his first sermon (linked with Christ's return and called restitution of all things) wrote that the Lord Himself spoke on that day while He was conversing with His disciples. He taught them "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"(Matthew 19:28).

The meaning of the word "regeneration " is "new birth". Apostle Paul used this word particularly for the believers as "new birth". Other commentators have suggested, that old heavens and old earth said to pass away but the present heavens and earth cannot be the new heavens and the new earth. Some critics seemed to have overlooked the fact that the Greek verb translated into pass away came from the root word "Parerchomai" which may be referred in (Matthew 5:18) with the meaning of "to come, come forth, go, pass, passover" etc.

Peter also spoke about the elements in heaven melting with fervent heat, and the works of earth being burnt up (2 Peter3:10). The teaching of God's word is that by the reason of fall of man, the present creation is in a sense of captivity. The descending of heavens and earth are not their annihilation but their long awaited deliverance from curse of sin.

God completed His creation of the universe in six days. On the second day He created the heavens, and created earth on the third day. The divine

commentary on all that what God created was “And God saw everything He made and behold it was very good”(Genesis:1:31). But within a short time Adam and Eve, the first parents disobeyed the commandment of God and that disobediencecaused a curse upon man, domain, heaven and earth and sea over which He was authorized to reign.

The heavens and the earth which were created “very good” before the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden now became “very bad”. And before their sin, there was no death, disease, war, famine, natural calamities, corruption, hate, rape, pollution and thousand other ills that had plagued men for more than six thousand years according to history. It is really strange that the present heavens and earth are to be dissolved -to be purged by fire during the days of the Lord in order to lose it from the consequences of sin. God would make a way for a new and perfect heaven and earth.

The new heavens and the new earth are a terrible prospect for the un-saved people of the world for all things they posses, including their lives, associated with the present heavens and earth, which are going to be burnt one day (2 Peter 2:10). But for those believers who are made righteous in Christ, the new heavens and the new earth are a glorious prospect. All their sadness and tears will be dissolved, and peace, joy, love, surprise, creativity and adventure would.

In regard to this situation, we may have genuine doubts as to when the new heavens and new eartheventually come. According to the viewsand opinions of some literary giants and elite, those who have faith in the pre-millennial return of Christ can understand that new heavens and the new earth will start at the end of the Lord’s thousand year millennial reign. So those scholars who have gone through the Book of Revelation (20<sup>th</sup> chapter) suggest that St John’s new heavens and new earth will follow contextually after a brief discussion of the millennium. Therefore, the new heavens and the new earth must occur at the end of millennium. St John also wanted to draw our attention to the fact that, during anti-Christ three and one half years of satanic empowerment, those living as un-saved people and those who missed the resurrection and rapture of the

church would become martyrs. They will be resurrected at the beginning of the millennium as part of the first resurrection unto life.

Then another question arises concerning those people who have rejected God's provision for sin through out the ages in regard to their outcomes. St John had an appropriate explanation for them, stating confidently that they would remain in the graves and then rise at the end of the millennium (Revelation 20:5). According to the great white throne judgment, all of them will be mercilessly and eternally consigned to the "lake of fire".

Apostle Peter, writing about the "day of The Lord" clearly linked that day of the Lord, to the new heavens and new earth. He pointed out in an understandable way that the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. And at that time the heavens shall pass away with loud noise and the elements shall melt in the fervent of heat. Then the earth and the worlds that are therein shall be burnt.

The blessed hope of any church is the second coming of Christ. He will resurrect those who have died in faith through out the ages and rapture, in one generation of believers. The day of the Lord has been defended by a noted scholar "E.E. Bruce" as the day, which "Yahweh (the Lord) will reveal Himself and will be:

- 1) The time when God arises to shake the earth terribly (Isaiah 19:21)
- 2) A time of destruction from the Almighty (Isaiah 13:6)
- 3) The time of divine wrath and fierce anger (Isaiah 13:13)
- 4) A time when God will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their inequity (Isaiah 13:11)
- 5) The time when God's indignation and fury will be directed against the nations (Isaiah 34:1)
- 6) The time of the fire from The Lord (Joel 3:18, 23:5)
- 7) There will be darkness at that time in heavens (Isaiah 39:10, Joel 2:31)

According to widespread teachings, the new heavens and new earth which Peter warned the believers to look into, occurs a thousand years after the second coming which is like a bridge too far leading to nowhere and without Biblical basis. The whole argument of Peter revolves around the fact that God entered the flow of human history for judgment with Noah's flood. And God will enter into human history for the second time during the "day of the Lord".

As indicated by Peter, the day of The Lord occurs at the end of the millennium, with absolute requirement for new heavens and the new earth. Then the Lord's second coming during which time, He will resurrect the dead in Christ's rapture with the living believers and that Satan would remain at the bottomless pit, and the anti-Christ and false prophets to the lake of fire. Then the earth will be purged.

Prophet Isaiah as God's spokesperson wrote "For behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind (Isaiah65:17).

Following the creation of new heavens and new earth, a practical listing of millennial blessings are given. Jerusalem shall be restored and blessed. Life would be expanded. Men would build houses and inhabit them. They might plant vineyards and eat fruits that come out of them.

The wolf and lamb shall feed together in the fields. Above all the lion shall eat straws like the bullocks (Oxes). All these surprising things may happen in the millennial kingdom. The new heaven and new earth that prophet Isaiah speaks about are renovated heavens and earth, which commence at the beginning of the millennium but not at the end.

John, while describing new heaven and new earth said "One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Revelation21:9). The seven angels were standing around a thousand years after pouring out their vials and the judgments were still identified as the seven angels with seven vials.

Still, the case might be such if the new heavens and new earth occur after the millennium.

The new age is really a glorious one, which is a blessing to the occupants in the sight of God, who finally inhabit the new heavens and new earth. The opening of the seventh seal indicates God's wrath that commences. The main purpose of the seal is to purge the cosmos(world), which has been defiled by sin. And during that period, God's grace and mercy would continue. Then there will be two more witnesses who are very powerful and who can prophecy for three and a half years, till the end of the seventeenth week.

In addition to this, there will be 1,44,000 witnesses, twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. They were sealed in order to protect them during the day of The Lord. And finally an angel will be there with a gospel in hand to preach to those who dwell on the earth. Among those who have surprised the earth physically till the end of Daniel's seventy weeks, God our Lord will designate them as "sheep" and "goats". They will be separated as sheep and goats by the Shepherd. After that decision, sheep will be sent to the eternal life, and goats to everlasting punishment, that is eternal damnation.

But the sheep remain there as mortals, until they are blessed through faith in Christ. Then they will be permitted to enter the new heavens and new earth. This may be done depending upon cataclysmic (catastrophic) events that are mentioned in the book of Revelation. Basing on the information so far, we can assume there are limited number of men and women with a place in the new heavens and new earth. It is also pointed out that only 7 billion people will survive the seventy weeks.

The people judged as sheep, will enter the millennial kingdom with prolonged life and childbearing years. They are allowed to beget children, grand children and great grand children. They will have the privilege of multiplying the population as long as no disease or catastrophic events enter into their lives. But we cannot presume anything at this juncture.



What happens to those who will be resurrected or raptured at the time of the second coming of Christ, and who possess glorified immortal bodies? We cannot also say whether those people who have immortal bodies can have any relationship with new heavens and new earth. St John saw in his vision, new heavens and new earth and also the holy city - the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, fully decorated as a bride to meet her husband The Lamb(Christ). Why this new Jerusalem, is called the Holy city, because it will be the capital city of Christ's millennial reign and also the place of His throne. The new Jerusalem appears to be a chandelier city as it is coming down out of heaven and from God.

The city rests upon new earth. This gives us the understanding that the new Jerusalem must be hanging in space like a chandelier (large round frame with side branches, hung to the ceiling for decoration purposes).

The new Jerusalem is the fulfillment of God's promise. As mentioned by John, this city is really a pre-existing city, purposely built for this moment in time. Jesus comforted His disciples by saying these words. "I go to prepare a place for you. I will come again to receive you unto myself that where I am there you may be also" (John 14:2-3).

This is the same new Jerusalem that Jesus promised. He would prepare the way before going to His Father. The new place will be revealed at His second coming. This attractive and a wonderful Jerusalem city will have strong foundations, and built by God Himself, well decorated as a bride to her husband. And the bride appeared to be more beautiful than any other lady on her wedding day, because the decoration is perfect.

The angel told John, that the new city of Jerusalem was enormous in size, measured after construction with a reed and was twelve thousand furlongs, with equal measurement from all sides, about 1380 miles each way. If we imagine this holy city with all the floors with one-mile intervals, we may have to understand there must be 1380 levels in the new Jerusalem. And each level contains 1,904,400

sq miles. In contrast, surface area of the whole earth including those parts under water is 196,950,000 sq miles. With this scenario, the surface area of new Jerusalem is thirteen times more than the surface area of the earth, measuring 2,628,072,000 sq miles, and thus, not an ordinary city.

In this context two thoughts come to our minds. First, in the city, glorified immortals and incorruptible souls must reside there. Second, as the city is immeasurably large in size, it can accommodate a huge multitude of people. So, who are these lucky people that will become residents or the citizens of that new Jerusalem which is supposed to be the most beautiful city to call it their sanctified home.

The new Jerusalem is a city well planned and designed by the Son of God for His bride. John said “and there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven seals full of the seven plagues and talked with me saying come hither I will show thee the bride, the wife of The Lamb. And he carried me away in the spirit to a high and great mountain and showed me the great holy city Jerusalem descending from God out of heaven.

The new Jerusalem city has twelve gates on each side, with each gate bearing the name of one of the tribes of Israel. This shows that a great number of the Old Testament believers who were justified by faith, like the patriarch Abraham, are brought into the limelight. The angel also told John that “the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in the foundations, the names of the twelve disciples justified by their faith. The disciples were also called the believers of the New Testament during the new age.

The new Jerusalem will become the “home” of all believers, starting from Abraham until the second coming of Christ. This huge city will have a permanent entrance, first for the sheep that survived the seventieth week of Daniel. The second entry, is for the resurrected believers who had died in Christ through the ages, and also who are living and raptured at Christ’s second coming. They were glorified and became immortals. They would have ultimate joy and privilege to become the citizens of the new Jerusalem.

This new Jerusalem is built with most precious ornaments for the decoration of the bride, a diamond ring, a gold wedding band and pearls studded necklace were brought. The foundations of the city were garnished (decorated) with precious stones. The first stone listed here is Jasper, literally meaning a diamond and the whole city was decorated with gold. In new Jerusalem God's promise and accessibility were there to all people that reside there. And John said there was no temple in that new Jerusalem, but the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the substitute for the temple. The city need not have the light of the sun or the moon because the glory of God is the light to the new holy city of Jerusalem.

## THE HOME OF YOUR HEART

‘I only ask one thing from our Lord. This is what I want, let me live in the Lord’s house all my life”(psalms 27:4).

This topic I am discussing now is purely concerned to the spiritual matters of the house here is not about the home made of stones, or wood, or straw with proper plan but it is concerned to the invisible home called the spiritual home. Just as a physical house that exists for our bodily welfare a spiritual home is also necessary to take care of our soul. We always think about a beautiful house with maximum facilities for our mortal body only. But we rarely think about the house for our soul that leads us finally to our salvation.

We some times forget that our body is mortal and our soul is immortal. With that idea in our minds, we should not give more importance to bodily things in this world. Our earthly body remains in a beautiful house where as our immortal soul will be wandering like a lonely cloud aimlessly over hills and valleys against the wishes of our God Almighty.

God has His own plan for our soul to live in peace and harmony; He does not want our soul to roam about thoughtlessly. He wants us to live with Him in His house because we are His children. We are part and parcel of our merciful God. As apostle Paul said, “ For in him we live and move, and have our being”(Acts 17:28). Since He is a spirit, He remains next to us. God Himself is our roof, walls to our house and a true foundation. He wants to be our mailing address and a reference for any thing so that we can completely depend upon Him and live peacefully.

The promise of His son is “If my people love me, they will obey my teaching. My father will love them and we will come to them and finally make our home with them”. For many people this might be a new thought, because they always take God as a deity and never to dwell with him. We might think God as a mysterious and miracle maker and not easily approachable.

When Jehovah led the children of Israel in the wilderness He stayed with them night and day. He stayed with them as a cloud during the day time and as a pillar of light during the night time. So, our merciful God never leaves us alone. And He promised this in (Mathew 28:20) “I will be with you always”. Our God is always dependable as He will provide us perpetual peace. He will be our fire of night and cloud of day. He will never desert us who believe Him with our faith.

God in heaven does not have any difference between Sunday morning or Thursday evening. We can approach Him at any time on any day with our prayer. Prayer is the only weapon by which we can become closer and more intimate with our God. He desires to talk with us always, irrespective of time and place. Some times, we may neglect and even Forget Him but He remembers us forever. Therefore through prayer, we can improve our relationship with God. Apostle Paul advised us to “pray without ceasing”, then “be constant in prayers” and “pray in the spirit at all times”.

David the man after God’s own heart said “I am asking Yehovah” for one thing to live with him in his house my whole life long. I will contemplate his beauty. I will study at his feet. That is the only quiet secure place in a noisy world.(Psalms 27: 4-5). Then what type of house of God David was looking for. That means David was yearning to be in the presence of God. He was longing to be in the house of God. He was a great poet among the Biblical writers, a great king and also a great killer.

Prayer would bring us ultimate joy. Even Jesus Christ being the son of God used to pray to His father by going to a lonely place. Through prayer we can talk with God our father face to face. Some people who are not habituated to pray might find it difficult to pray in the initial stage. Then they can mug up the Lord’s prayer and recite it as and when prayer is required. And that Lord’s prayer is as follows :

Our father, who are in heaven Hallowed be thy name :.....  
.....  
.....

For thine is the kingdom and the power And the glory forever and ever .....  
Amen.(Matthew 6 : 9-13)

“ Our father who is in heaven?” with these words Jesus Christ is leading and inviting us into the house of our Lord, shall all of us follow him?, Let us walk behind him, so that He will lead us into God’s living room since our hearts need a father. After sitting comfortably in the chair in our God’s living room and if we look at some of the portraits, hanging on the walls, we will certainly come across the portrait of father and son called the story of prodigal son.

This is the one of the moral stories from the New Testament called The prodigal son. According to the story , the younger son took the share of his property and went out of the house. He wandered into different places till all the money was exhausted. He suffered without food for some days. His last days were so pathetic he even began to eat bran that was given to the pigs in somebody’s house. He finally repented and decided to go back to his fathers house not as his son but as one of his servants. He offered his father not any gift nor explanation but only the smell of pigs and a rehearsal apology. So, what he said was “Father, I have sinned against God, and done wrong to you, I am no longer worthy to be called your son”.( Luke 15:21). And added, he was unworthy of his birth right.

He did not like to stay in his father’s house in the capacity of his second son. So he said demote me, Punish me, take my name off the mail box and my initials off family tree. I am willing to give up my place at your table. The prodigal son acted his part very well. Though the boy wanted to stop being his son the father is not willing to stop being a father. When the father found the lost son his joy knew no bounds. In his extreme happiness he even shed tears. Then the father ordered best clothes a gold ring, and shoes immediately for his son. Father also asked his servants to find out a fat calf to celebrate that happy occasion of the return of that prodigal son.

The father said , My son was dead but now he is alive again. He was lost but now he is found. This young man must have stunned at these words especially

“ My son was dead”. The child might be out of his house but he was not out of his fathers heart. He must have left the table but he never left the family. Let us not forget the heart breaking message here. We may be willing to be called ourselves the children of God. But God is always willing to call us his children. Basing on this moral story, we may conclude that God is our merciful father and we are His prodigal sons.

God is addressed by people with different names in the Bible. And the most familiar name is Father. He also likes to be called so. Even Jesus called Him father Don't you know that I must be with my father in His house. Jesus in His prayer said Father I will give you my life. In the gospel of John alone Jesus repeated this name about 156 times. So, God loves to be called Father by us. It is beyond our understanding when Jesus called Jehovah ABBA . What is a common practice today was unheard of during the days of Jesus Christ.

“Abba” was an everyday word or homely or a word used in the family. But it is very strange no Jew was dared enough to use that word in the family. They never addressed God as Abba. And Jesus Christ also authorized His disciples to use that word Abba after Him. And also it seemed Jesus gave them a share in His sonship. Even in our Lord's prayer the starting words are “our father” , reminds us. We are welcomed into the house of God as we have been adopted by the owner of that house. When we think about Jesus, He not only forgives us but also adopts us. It must be perhaps God's plan to adopt whoever wish to go to Him.

He would accept us as His sons and then take us into His house and provide all our needs without our asking. After experiencing all the hospitality we feel like calling Him “Holy”. We can also call Him “King”. But when we want to touch Him or pray for our needs we must address Him “Father”.

In the Old Testament God is addressed with many names. Let us try to understand at least some of His names. If we study carefully, we can find at least eighty names mentioned in the Bible. Which were given by the Biblical heroes out of their faith. In the begging God was known as “Elohim”. It is a Hebrew

word which means “a strong one or creator”. This name was repeated at least thirty one times in the first chapter of Genesis alone. As God revealed Himself to his children, they saw in Him more than a mighty force. They saw in Him a loving “Father”, when he met them at the cross roads of their lives.

The next example is about Jacob, who came to see God as “Jehovah Raah” . which means a caring shepherd. Jacob told his family members as he was talking with God, “you had led me all my life”. This is no doubt a compliment about God. Because Jacob was a less than comparative sheep. God blessed him and finally his children were taken as God’s chosen people called Israelites. Jacob was not at all a well behaved man and a worthy candidate to the comparison of the other Biblical heroes in order to give him a good shepherd awarded yet God gave him food at the time of famine and forgiveness. If any body questions him how God was, he would simply say ‘Jehovah raah’ which means “ a caring shepherd”.

Regarding Abraham, God blessed him plentifully than all other Bible heroes. Yet he called God “Jehovah Jireh” , which means “God will provide”. Actually, his life was quite peaceful in “Ur”. But God asked him to leave that place and go to Canaan , the land of milk and honey that God promised to his descendants. When people questioned him, how he could live in that strange place, he simply answered, God will provide. Such strong faith and belief Abraham had towards God. His family members seemed to have worried about him, but he was never disturbed.

The final test of Abraham’s faith was the sacrifice of his son Isaac. One day God asked Abraham, to sacrifice his only son for Him on the Mount Morea. Without any feeling or doubt he went to the spot with all the necessary things. Then Abraham asked his son Isaac to lean on the sacrificial altar. And when he was about to cut Isaac, God asked him to stop and provided a lamb for that sacrificial purpose. Abraham did the sacrifice and saved his only begotten son from the death. That was the faith of Abraham.



So, to his credit Abraham had some titles. He was called father of many nations. He was called the father of circumcision. He was called the father of righteousness. He was called the father of faithful etc. .

When his son enquired about the lamb for the sacrifice, Abraham replied “Jehovah Jireh “. That means “God is the provider”.

The next man God watched to bring to the lime light from Bible was the most insignificant fellow “Gidion” . One day , God sent His angel to Gidion with a message. He was asked by the angel to save Israelites from the cruel lands of Medianites. Because they became a constant to them. God wanted to use this common man to achieve His goal. Then Gidion made some troublesome sacrifice at the place where he meet the angel and called that place “Jehovah Shalom” which means “peace be unto you”. He thought for some time that he would die because he had seen God face to face. But God gave him confidence he would not die, as He was with him.

This example gives the idea that we can do any thing and every thing as long as God is at our back and push us forward. God will always encourage us to do that kind of impossible things possible, by putting in us confidence that leads us to improve faith on Him. Thus He gives us a wonderful gift the gift of peace at all times and on all occasions including peace of good understand. The same peace God gave to David after he showed him the giant Goliath for fighting. God gave the same peace to Saul who became Paul later by showing him the Gospel. God gave peace to Jesus Christ also by showing Him the cross. Now He gave the same peace to Gideon after he won the war and brought peace to Israel from the enemy.

And much might be said about the faithful servant of God called Moses. He carved the name of God as Jehovah Rophe . for this we can find the English translation in Exodus 15.26 as “I am the Lord Who heals you”. About one and half million Israelites followed Moses into the desert land. Their jubilation over liberation soon became their frustration, due to their condition of dehydration.

These Israelites walked for a few days in that barren desert and came to a lake. The water in it appeared to be dirty, blackened bitter and dangerous.

Then Moses saw the situation that they were grumbling among themselves for water. And he cried unto God. But God showed him a tree nearby when he begged for water. He must have thrown away the tree into the water out of curiosity. The water became pure and perfect. All of them drank that water and quenched their thirst and the Almighty was glorified. In this case God Himself revealed his name I am the Lord Who heals you. He is also called Jehovah Nisei . which means the Lord is my banner. The banner in the battle field has its own importance. When the battle was going on seriously and when a soldier was left alone in helpless condition, he would raise his banner to indicate the position.

In the same way when the Amalekites attacked Israelites on their way to the promised land, Moses went up to the top of the mountain and prayed to God. The battle was in full swing. As long as Moses raised his hands, Israelites were in success. Whenever he put his hands down the Amalekites won the battle. He understood the situation. He was not an ordinary man and God was with him. He kept his hands raised continuously and the Amalekites ran away from the battle field.

After that Moses built an altar and chiseled a name of God on a stone. It is called Jehovah Nisei which means the Lord is my banner. These few names are mentioned here to understand His character. And let us see how far these names are applicable to our daily life.

- 1) Elohim ——— the great one creator. We can depend upon Him for any thing in our life.
- 2) when you are anxious about provision, then talk to Jehovah Jireh, He will provide you what is needed in critical conditions.
- 3) If the challenges are too big for you to tackle then seek the help of Jehovah Shalom. The Lord will give you the peace.
- 4) If your body is sick of something which is unbearable then Jehovah rapha. The Lord will heal you and take care of you.

- 5) If you are a soldier struck up in a dangerous situation look at Jehovah Nisei. The Lord is your banner, you can take shelter in Him.

So God is the shepherd , Who guides you., the Lord Who brings peace, in the storm, the physician who heals the sick and the banner that guides the soldier. Let us understand how God wants to reveal Himself to His blesses. Two heavy hearted disciples were on their way to Emmaus. It was the resurrection Sunday. Jesus body was still in grave. They were lamenting that Jesus would save Israel from the Roman rule and also from the taxes. Though the disciples moved with Him for three years they did not correctly understand Him and the purpose of His coming into this world. He had come to deal with the people regarding the sin and death but not to deal and force Israel from the Roman rule.

Both were wrong in their thinking, they missed the main purpose of His coming into this world and His death. That Sunday would have been the happiest day for them, had they understood the real purpose of His death and the resurrection. They did not understand the will of God. So they were in despair. God has a will for us. He said I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you, I will give you a hope and good future (Jeremiah 29.11). He is willing to receive you into His house and discuss with you certain important matters concerning eternal life or salvation etc. .

God is asking you to meet Him sit with Him and clarify all your doubts that are hiding in your heart. God has plenty of time at His disposal. You come and seek the will of God. In our prayer, if you say Thy will be done, it means we are seeking the heart of God. The word “will” means a strong desire. The study is what we can learn and what God wants us to learn. Our God is the God with open mind and with open heart. He is not the God of confusion. That is what He was doing on the road of Emmaus with the two disciples. They witnessed the process of the death of Jesus for some time and left that place with empty heads. Then they packed their bag and baggage and left that place. They headed towards Emmaus and Jesus met them on the road.

It is really wonderful that Jesus met the disciples on the same road. How does he reveal His will to us. You may be surprised at this simple process, God wants to reveal His will through the believers. Jesus spoke to women on the first Easter and in turn they spoke to us. He spoke to believers through believers. He wanted to reveal Himself and His will through the people of God.

One day God Himself reveals to you through the church. He will reveal to you through the word of God. In spite of their continuous touch with Jesus the disciples disregarded his word. It was their second mistake. They did not care to look into the Scripture . they listened to their fears only. But Jesus appeared to them after resurrection and corrected them with the Bible. He warned them that they were foolish enough in not believing what is said by the prophets in the scripture.

In the words of the prophets Jesus must suffer persecution, then He must be crucified and then on the third day He must raise from the grave. This is all written in the Bible but the disciples were not aware of it, through the words of prophets , He used scripture to reveal His will. This is the Gods will that I should raise up those who have given me (John 6.39) .

It is Gods will that you be born again that you be born not of the will of flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1.13). It is not God's will that one little one perish.(Matthew 18.14). it is my fathers will that every one who sees the son and believes on Him at the Last day.(John 6.40). it is God's will that all people of the world should be saved when you come across two roads you must think wisely which road would lead to the kingdom of God. His general will provides us with guidelines which help us to understand His specific will for our individual life.

The disciples at last begged Jesus to stay with them because it was already night and Jesus stayed with them. We can also understand the will of God by spending more time in his presence. The key to knowing the heart of God is by having relationship with Him, a personal relationship as God spoke to Moses through the burning bush. That does not mean all of us should go to a bush

near by and wait for God to come out of that busk and speak with us. God used a fish to correct Jonah who was asked by God to go to Nineveh city with a message. But Jonah was reluctant to go to that city and planned to go to Joppa. Finally he was thrown into the sea and a fish was arranged to swallow Jonah. That does not mean all of us should go to a sea shore and wait for a fish to come out of water and swallow us. Jesus followed the disciples up to Emmaus but pretended as if He had to go to further. That does not mean Jesus was not willing to stay with people who would not invite Him at all with their hearts. Our Lord would be waiting for our invitation always.

Please remember one technical point in this context. Jesus allowed them to recognize Him only after He was properly invited to stay with them that night. There is one final way God would reveal Himself. That IS THROUGH THE FIRE OF God. When they saw who He was and recognized Him. He disappeared. They felt like a fire burning in their hearts, when Jesus talked with them on the road and explained the scripture to them. They knew they had been with Him because of the fire with in them.

God reveals His will by setting a torch to your soul. He gave Jeremiah a fire for hard hearts. He gave Nehemiah a fire for a forgotten city. He set Abraham on fire for a land he had never seen. He set Isaiah on fire with a vision he could not resist. Forty years of wilderness wanderings did not douse the passion of Moses.

Jericho city could not slow Joshua and Goliath did not deter David. There was a fire burning within all of them. “What is the fire that consumes you then?”

God walks like a torch from heart to heart warming the cold, and thawing the chilled, and stirring the ashes . He is at once a Galilean, welfare and welcome candle. He will come to purge infection and illuminate your direction. So the fire of your heart is the light of your path. And those who are without that fire will mock at it. Those who know it and these who know Jesus will understand it correctly. Therefore to meet the savior means to be set aflame. To discover His flame is to access a world like you have seen.

“ And lead us not into temptation But deliver us from the evil one”.

Satan was God’s servant as long as he was allowed to remain in heaven, he was most handsome and most powerful among the Arch angels, as pride goes before one’s fall he became proud of himself for his qualifications and rebelled against God for equal rights in heaven. And to God he became like a bee in the bonnet. So, God was disgusted with his behavior and necked him out of heaven into the bottomless pit. He came to the earth with one third of the angel population. According to Bible history the population of angels is about one hundred crores. As long as he was in heaven his name was Lucifer . But the moment he was thrown out of heaven his name was changed to satan, evil, devil etc. .

Even after coming to the earth Satan continued his rebellious activities not directly on God but on his creation of people. For his revenge against God. Adam and Eve became his victims. Let us consider some of the persons in the Bible, how this satan tried to influence them by his cunning nature. God promised Sara wife of Abraham a child and that could not be fulfilled for a good number of years. In such conditions satan arranged a crib to tempt Sara against God’s promise. Yet Sara got a son Isaac, when she was about to lose all her hopes because her age. So God saves all the best to the last.

In the case of Moses king pharaoh permitted Israel to go out of his country. When they were going he followed them with some soldiers to bring them back, satan who had been watching all that felt happy, pharaoh reached the red sea to the spot where the Israelites were about to cross the red sea. But he was shocked to see the safe crossing of the red sea by all Israel and the drowning scene of all soldiers of pharaoh and their miserable death. The Satan did not understand the power of God. Even then God’s power is more powerful than the power of king Pharaoh.

The next man to be considered was prophet Daniel. Many young and energetic men were taken as captives from Jerusalem to Babylon. Satan thought by taking all intelligent people of Jews, God was defeated and he became

successful. But to his surprise Daniel enjoyed all top most positions in that kingdom next to the king . Daniel with other three young Jews Shedrack, Meshack and Abednego made the king to praise our God by saying that there was no other God greater than our God . As a matter of fact the king used Daniel for his extra-ordinary intelligence he was praised by the king and also the king praised the God of Daniel.

At every attempt satan received a rebuff and became a fool. So as satan proposed one thing God disposed another thing. Regarding Paul, when he was imprisoned, satan thought his prison life would silence the pulpit and felt happy. That was done of course, but the most wonderful thing was he could write letters to the churches of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. While he was in the prison.. those letters became so important in the New Testament that , some Biblical commentators said, without the letters of Apostle Paul there is no New Testament.

Apostle Peter was another example Satan tried to discredit Jesus by providing Peter to deny Him. But Satan's plan was fired back and Peter set an example of how God's grace can extend, "Deliver us from the evil ones". The meaning of these words in our prayer is that we needed always the protection of God from Satan, the evil Satan.

What must be the main reason for Satan to became the trouble suitor to the people of God. He was originally one of the Arch angels not satisfied with the status he was given in heaven by God. He claimed equal position with God. He was not happy to worship God like other angels. He wished for equal throne with God. In the words of Prophet Ezekiel both Satan's beauty and evil were unequalled among angels. The angels were asked to worship God like other human beings.

Prophet Isaiah and prophet Ezekiel both narrated the character of an angel. They said, the angel was more powerful than any other human being and more beautiful than any other human beings, Yet more foolish than any other human being who has ever lived. His pride was main reason for his down fall.

Lucifer, even with his pure and perfect heart was inferior to God. All angels are inferior to God and even today Satan is the servant of God Almighty.

He was also called by some critics as “The servant of paradise”. The spirit of God which is in you undoubtedly greater than the evil which is which is in this world. But God used Satan always for this purpose, and after the work is done he was fooled and sent out. Satan was only an instrument in the hands of God to advance his activities. Let us see some examples how God is using the devil for the fulfillment of heavenly issues.

God will use Satan to refine the faithful. Apostle Paul was a Chosen author of the Bible by God. He wrote about thirteen letters which became very famous in the New Testament. The other Biblical writers worried a lot over his death, because they lost such a great man. He penned some historical documents. He healed the sick and travelled into many places in spreading the word of God. He loved Paul very much but God hated pride in him. And so He used Satan to do that. Three times I pleaded with God to take it away from me. but God said to Paul “ My grace is sufficient for you, My power is made perfect in weakness”.

Satan and his powers are simply tools in the hands of God . Of all examples, the most touching is the incident of Job. God used Satan to test the faith of Job on Him. God gave him full permission to Satan on Job but not on his body. Satan tried his best to change Job against God but in vain. Job passed this test and received double blessing from God. But Satan grumbled over in himself and said, Job would have fallen if he had been forced some pain to his body. Satan has no power to use on any body except that God gives him.

Satan tried even to control Jesus Christ at one stage. But the later simply warned him and sent away. Christ said the first century church Smyrna “Do not be afraid of what you are about, to suffer, I tell you the devil will put some of you in prison to test you and you will suffer ten days. But be faithful even if you have to die and I will give you a crown of life”. (Revelation 2.10). Jesus tells about the persecution in the church and the duration of suffering is just ten days. The outcome of ten days persecution is a crown of life.



Here God used Satan as a tool to persecute a faithful. He could bear it patiently for ten days and received the award of the crown of life. God also used Satan to awaken the sleeping. About one thousand years ago, before apostle Paul another Jewish leader Saul became the first king of Israel. Unfortunately he became jealous of David the next king for his abilities. As time passed on Saul became insanelly hostile to David. Now God wanted to awaken him from the fog of jealousy and looked for the unwilling service of Satan. Then an evil spirit was sent upon Saul and he prophesied in his own house.

If Saul would not drink the cup of God's kindness , let him drink despair and cup of hell's fury. The New Testament also gives some references, where deception is administered. Apostle Paul tried to check the church in Corinth for their tolerance towards immorality. As spoke about an adulterer in church, and then handed that man over to Satan. With that act his sinful life would have been destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.

Apostle Paul gave proper instructions to Timothy a young Evangelist. He was dealing with two disciples who had shipwrecked faith and who tried to influence other members negatively. After locating those who worshiped the creation rather than the creator, Paul said, "God left and let them do the shameful things they wanted to do. We have seen so far some examples, how God used Satan for testing and changing some people, as His personal achievements.

Though Satan plans something he has to get the permission from God "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me".. Jesus said, this is the proof, the wolf can not get the sheep with out permission from shepherd, and the shepherd will only permit the attack, if it is worth in the long run. You intended evil against me, but you meant it for good.(Genesis 50.20). we must always remember one thing, Satan can never enter into the walls of the "Great House of God".

Following are some of the names addressed to God out of about 80 in number

- 1) Elohim (Hebrew) --- a strong one, or creator. This word Elohim is repeated about 31 times in Genesis 1 chapter itself.
- 2) Jehovah raah --- a caring shepherd.
- 3) Jehovah Jirrah --- God will provide .
- 4) Jehovah raphe --- I am the Lord Who heals you.
- 5) Jehovah Nisei --- the Lord is my banner.
- 6) Jehovah shalom --- the Lord will give peace.
- 7) Elsheddai --- God of mountain.
- 8) ABBA --- Father .
- 9) Shekinah --- Glory of God.
- 10) Rabbonie --- My great one.
- 11) Yahweh --- My Lord.

## FAITH CONQUERS



This is the story of a blind man by name “Bartimaeus” who succeeded in his persistent efforts to meet Jesus to get his blindness healed. This story, quoted from the 10th chapter in the book of Mark, is considered one of the best episodes from the Bible, especially with the persistence of Bartimaeus to achieve his goal. We may find qualitative and moral teachings from this episode, towards our constant effort to receive any thing from our Lord. Jesus expected similar persistence among his disciples that Bartimaeus possessed. So, Jesus said, “Ask and it shall be given to you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened” (Matthew 7:7-9).

The main purpose of persistence is like teaching within the family. “James” the brother of Jesus in his typical blunt way had said, “you fight and war, yet you have not because you ask not” (James 4:2). It means, if we desire anything, we must ask God, and ask for it persistently till we get it from Him. There are two

main points to note in this context. First, whatever we desire from our Lord must be done with devotion and faith. A Hebrew author expressed a similar idea, stating that, without faith it is impossible to please God. We must therefore ask in faith and we must ask persistently. Secondly we must not ask God simply what we have in our mind. Before we ask anything, we must think whether God is willing to grant our desire. Our willingness for something and God's willingness to grant that must coincide for any success. That is to say, we must ask God only things he likes.

Apostle Paul points out “if you abide in me (Jesus) and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will it shall be done to you”(John 15:7). Abiding in Jesus Christ requires both persistence and familiarity. We must spend more time with Jesus in prayers and meditation, so that over time, we hope to be with his will. To remain strong in faith requires persistence and in order to achieve that we must look into the story of Bartimaeus.

Bartimaeus, an Israelite, was born blind. He struggled a lot during his life but found peace in Jesus heart through undying persistence. So in our lives, God wants all of us to be like him, considered the best example for persistence and also referred to as the king of persistence for his untiring efforts.

Jesus and his disciples were on their way to Jerusalem to participate in the Passover festival. This time was very crucial for Jesus because he was entering the city where his life would be taken away from him shortly. During this final week, his glorious three-year ministry would be culminated, this emotional week would change the course of human history for eternity.

Bartimaeus was somehow known to the community of Jericho and was designated as the blind Bartimaeus. His brief account was also given by Matthew, (Matt. 20:30-34), highlighting two beggars without names. In this case the name Bartimaeus was depicted, as a concerned beggar. The meaning of this name Bartimaeus was “the son of Timeous”, and the meaning of his fathers' name - “depicted”. Some scholars were of the opinion that the father of Bartimaeus was also blind. In those days blind people were born that way or became blind, which was considered a curse or punishment from God.

Bartimaeus had a designated permanent spot, sitting and begging on the highways. On that day Jesus was passing through that highway with his disciples, disturbed the usual day of begging for Bartimaeus. If we lose a limb or a body part due to whatever reason, we become unhappy. And if it involves our vision, no one can guess how we feel throughout our life, as we can't see anything in this world including our kith and kin. So, to be blind is generally considered the most miserable feeling in this world.

Bartimaeus understood the great commotion around him was due to the arrival of Jesus. At that time, among the various kinds of people gathered there, some commented that Jesus was a God. Some believed he would bring political freedom to Israel from the Romans. And some shouted against Jesus in a hateful manner. Bartimaeus also shouted. He zealously cried out to Jesus, not to be denied by Him from his desperate condition.

“How did Bartimaeus address Jesus”? He shouted “Jesus the son of David, have mercy on me.” By referring to Jesus as the “Son of David” a clear-cut Messianic term, he correctly demonstrated his thoughts. He must have come to this understanding through his abundant faith in God. The ministry of Jesus proclaimed Him as the Messiah of Israel. Many people didn't believe this proclamation, but among those who believed Him, Bartimaeus was one.

Wherever Jesus went, he also had enemies. So when Bartimaeus was shouting at Jesus, some people in the crowd warned him to refrain from doing so, and charged him to hold his tongue. There were three kinds of people in the crowd with different opinions about Christ. The first type who believed the words of Bartimaeus when he called Jesus “Son of David”, but his shouting had disturbed their peace. The second type of people, who didn't believe that Jesus was the Messiah, as they seemed to have heard it for the first time. The third type had faith in Jesus, and believed that Jesus would be made king of Israel, and that he should not be associated with common society.

The constant shouting of Bartimaeus irritated the first type in the crowd described above. When some tried their best to silence him to control him, he

defiantly began to shout louder than before. He never seemed to care for their obstructionism, and appeared to say - “the more you tell me to shut up, the more I am going to shout”. Until that time, the blind beggar was shouting for alms, but this time he was straining more, as the gift of healing his blindness by Jesus was more precious than any thing for him, and incomparable in any capacity to his regular alms. Therefore he was constantly shouting “Jesus, the son of David, have mercy on me”.

He had confidence that Jesus was capable of restoring his vision because of his faith towards the Messiah. He was right in his sayings about Jesus, and was appealing to Jesus to take up his case to heal his blindness. Many walking people shouting other things stopped moving in surprise. Jesus picked up this lone man from a thousand screaming voices. Some were screaming for healing, some for their devotion towards him, and some hauling at him in derision. But the voice of Bartimaeus was sincere and coated with purity, devotion and longing. His persistence in pursuing Jesus was really wonderful and persuasive enough to induce the king of the universe to stop walking. Jesus, undoubtedly an expert in dealing with this kind of situations appropriately, heard Bartimaeus and commanded him to come closer.

It is certainly fascinating to see that Jesus, who was about to change the history of the world within a week by his crucifixion, would actually spare some time to meet the needs of poor people like the honest beggar Bartimaeus. He had a pure and perfect heart. His heart and soul were filled with strong faith and belief, the kind that easily touched the heart of God.

The blind beggar’s faith based persistence was more effective probably due to his blindness. Everything came to a standstill when Jesus stopped and the murmuring went on. We must guess whether the blind beggar was responsible for the hubbub. Jesus also might not have called Bartimaeus directly, but must have sent some one towards him. At that time it seemed there were many blind people gathered there, hoping for some miracle to take place, so Bartimaeus had every reason to “Be of good comfort”.

When the divine directive order had come to Bartimaeus saying, “Rise He calls thee” - with these words, one can understand what must have been in the mind of the beggar. We are not sure how long he knew Jesus, but we can be sure of one thing that he was a staunch believer in Jesus. And now all that he heard about Jesus, all that he believed, and all that he trusted through his faith would be revealed to him soon. The beggar was in darkness until then, and now he was going to see the light of the world.

Bartimaeus wished to meet the light of the world (Jesus) face to face. He threw away his garment (shawl), probably to free himself. That shawl appeared to be an expensive one and someone might come out of the crowd and claim that one. The people around him also gave him the way. As he was a blind man there is a very possibility to lose his way. And finally Bartimaeus met Jesus. It was a Messianic meeting, a wonderful success in his life. He boldly crossed the crowd to meet the Messiah of Israel. It was the culmination of the blind beggar's wasted dark life.

Bartimaeus was shouting before the Lord. He said “Son of David, have mercy on me”. Then Jesus summoned the blind beggar that showed He was really interested to show mercy upon the beggar. Jesus being omniscient what the beggar wanted, he would have given him. But it was the habit of Jesus to question the people that meet him. He knew what we need before we ask him. Jesus is our loving Lord. He likes to meet his children and talk to them. He wants to have relationship with us forever and that relationship involves love and communion. Jesus always loves us even if we don't love Him. He wants us to spend some time in prayer and meditation.

Jesus was ready to bless the blind beggar, but questioned him in a casual manner. He asked the beggar “What do you want me to do for you”? There was something going on in the crowd. Many people simply heard the name of Jesus, but they didn't know who he was. They were going to see his actions, also in regard to the blind beggar through a miracle. The second point is that Jesus was going to teach the crowd something more important as all were his children. As

every one was important to Jesus in some way, Jesus was more important to all of us. The third point was concerning to Jesus himself and his child Bartimaeus - what he would do to him, as within a week, Jesus was going to be crucified for him and for all of us.

The blind beggar was seeking vision from Jesus. So he loudly said, “Lord, might I receive my sight”. The original word that Bartimaeus used for the Lord was “Rabbani” which means “My great one”. The word Rabbani was among the most honorable vocabulary in those days and the blind beggar used that word freely. This man knew from the beginning that Jesus was capable of giving him sight. Jesus also announced in the beginning of His ministry that He came to do many things, and healing the sick was one of them.

The spirit of the Lord was with Him. The Lord also anointed Him into the world to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, and restore sight to the blind. The remarkable faith of Bartimaeus brought him two gifts, though he was seeking just the restoration of his vision. After granting both gifts, Jesus said, “Go your way, your faith has made you heal”. It is fascinating to note here, Jesus practically spoke nothing about his granting of sight. But he had stressed more for he was made “whole”. This is another way of saying that his soul had been saved from hell. The beggar didn’t come for redemption, but for healing his sight. His virtuous devotion and unbounded faith brought him salvation. And by this, God made him the citizen of eternity. Bartimaeus precious life was responsible for his two valuable gifts, the sight as well as salvation.

What he was seeking all the time became reality. The actual physical healing was different from the inner reality, which Jesus said that Bartimaeus had been made “whole”. This reference was perhaps understood by only a limited number of people from that crowd. However, every one must have understood the significance of restoring the sight because, such miracles could be done only by the Messiah. Jesus banished blindness from Bartimaeus.



Jesus made perfect, the healing of the blindness of Bartimaeus. There was no effort, no error, or ineffectiveness, when the creator of the universe did that. The work of God is perfect. Whoever comes to Jesus for any need, He will help him and accept him as his child and this is proved in the case of Bartimaeus.

He became grateful to the Lord for the reward he received. Let us study the verse again. The original phrase by Jesus in this context was, “Go your way”. This is another way of saying by Jesus, “Go in Peace”. Instead, Jesus could have told him “Everything you have asked me to do for you I have done and more. Now go your way in peace, you are completely healed”. It was not the intention of Jesus to say it like that in order to get rid of the people, but to make sure he had completed the work of healing. It was His way of telling him “All is well”.

Finally Bartimaeus was healed. He got his eyesight. He expressed his gratitude to Jesus for this reward. But there were many more waiting anxiously with the hope they too would be healed like Bartimaeus. If they were successful, they would go back to their places and tell their friends and relatives about the miracles of Jesus and so on. Though Bartimaeus was healed, he didn't want to leave that place, because he was in the presence of the Messiah. In this short story, we are given the vision of a man in full worship mode, we understood someone whose persistence was driven by his wonderful faith.

This Galilean was not a simple magician who performed a variety of miracles, but also a savior of humanity and the Lord of all. There was no doubt that the immutable faith of Bartimaeus had brought Jesus to that highway from Jericho city.

It was his faith that prompted him to cry out to Jesus. It was his faith that did not allow him to remain silent. It was his spotless faith that brought him physical healing and spiritual salvation. And finally it was his unchangeable faith that carried him along to Jerusalem, praising and worshipping the Messiah as he went.

Persistence in Christian life is not persistence for salvation. But as true Christians we can be persistent to our benefits from our God. If we desire anything from our Lord, we must keep asking for it persistently. We must always be in touch with God and keep communion with Him. This, we learnt from the story of Bartimaeus. Jesus was very much impressed by the character of Bartimaeus and wished to spend a little time with him. Jesus considered him his beloved and faithful child. So God wants us to live the livable life filled with persistence.

God wants us to be persistent in our prayers. We must spend more time in prayers because through prayers only we can become close to God. We can have direct contact with God. Persistence in us is a perfect spiritual two way street between Jesus and us.

This is the moral we can learn from the story of Bartimaeus, the blind beggar.

## ZACCHAEUS CLIMBING SYCAMORE TREE

Generally all the Bible readers are aware of the story of Zacchaeus a publican and tax collector. When he came to know that Jesus was coming to his place he became curious to see Him somehow or other. So he preferred a sycamore tree on the way to climb to see Jesus as he was a short man. In this connection we are also reminded of the song sung by the lovely Sunday school children in regarding the climbing of the tree by him. This story also gives us moral that we too must climb higher to look at our savior Jesus for our salvation.

According to some scholars the name Zacchaeus came from Hebrew Aramaic “Zachai” which means “pure”. It was probably shortened from the home phone “Fzadik” which mean “religious”. This would be similar to the familiar name of “Lazarus” in John II which came from the Hebrew word “Ellazer” this word means “God is help’ or “eleazere” means God is help my” some of the scholars suggested that it was a shortened form of “Zacchaeus “ (zachr). Then the tree that is mentioned in (Luke 19:4) and translated as a sycamore came from ancient Greek word, “sukomorea” (fig tree foolish or tasteless) and it seemed referred to the sycamore tree.

In Biblical terms, these trees were abundant in the lower part of Galilee and in Egypt. Because those regions had warmer temperature in contrast to the cooler temperature in upper Galilee. This sycamore tree would grow very large in size with a thick trunk and its circumference would be about forty feet. Regarding its wood though not good and ideal, it was used for various purposes.

With its large branches it became an ideal and perfect one for Zacchaeus to climb that tree to see the Lord clearly as He was walking in the crowd. This sycamore tree is a different species from the common fig tree of (Matthew 21:19-21) and (Luke 21:29). This same type of sycamore trees can be found in America and Europe also. Out of four gospel writers only Luke gave us this most interesting and enlightening information in his book. So it is said; “And Jesus entered and

passed through Jericho and behold there was a man named Zacchaeus which was the chief among the publicans and he was rich. He had strong desire to see Jesus and to know about him who He was. But he could not stand on the street because he was a short man to see Jesus and he climbed up this sycamore tree”

And when Jesus came to that spot He saw Zacchaeus on the tree and said unto him “Zacchaeus make haste and come down for today I must abide at thy house.” Then he came down and received Jesus joyfully. When the Pharisees all this they murmured among themselves and commented that He had gone to be a guest to a man who was a sinner.

Zacchaeus stood and said unto the Lord “behold Lord half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation I restore him fourfold, and Jesus said unto him, this day is salvation come to his house for so much as he also is a son of Abraham for the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost (luke19:1-10). The traditional song sung by the children about the climbing of that tree by zacchaeus was in the following manner with some changing of words here and there.

Zacchaeus was wee little man,  
And a wee little man was he  
He climbed up in the sycamore tree  
The better his Lord to see,  
And as the savior passed that way  
He looked up in the tree  
And he said “Zacchaeus”  
For you come down I’m doing to your house for tea  
(Or today instead of for tea)  
For I’m going to your house for tea”

(It was a traditional song copy right unknown)

This brief account of Zacchaeus climbing the tree to see Jesus in (Luke 19:1-10) came after the parable of two men who went up to pray. One was Pharisee and the other publican. Apostle Luke said about both of them in

(18<sup>9-14</sup>). As we find in these verses the penitent publican was declared righteous by Jesus where as the Pharisee who justified himself and who proclaimed that he had given his tithes of everything he possessed was still declared unrighteous before God. This parable clearly indicated the sinfulness and self righteousness of the Pharisee.

The publican (being a tax collector) must have repented before Jesus. It appears the people hated publicans because of their profession (as tax collector) but generally Jews were the tax collectors for Romans Jesus wanted to maintain good relationship even with self righteous sinners like Pharisees. But in turn the pharisees always opposed the teachings and other activities of Jesus throughout. They also did not like the healing of the sick even on Sabbath day by Jesus. All these incidents caused Jesus to expose their self righteousness, their hypocrisy and finally declared them as sinners.

The Hebrew word for Pharisee is “pharashim” and those Pharisees were completely different from gentiles and Romans. These Pharisees were the major political party called “Sanhedrin”. And it was called Jewish political party that formed even the government in Jesus time.

These Pharisees also became more influential at that time. They controlled the rules and regulations of the temple. They could do anything and everything because of their unyielding legalism and quick condemnation of all who differed with them. In such conditions the Lord told a parable where in the Pharisee went home not justified by God, and the publican was justified, and the Pharisee took it as an insult inspire of all that the Lord wanted to put before them the truth. The young ruler who came to Jesus in a self-righteous manner was also attacked by the words of the Lord. He said that the young ruler was unwilling to give away his money to the poor but wanted to follow him.

Here we can see how Jesus challenged the rich young ruler for his money to the poor only. He directed Zacchaeus to help the poor but not to Jesus treasure or to his fund. God the father has been an example for centuries to his followers. This incident also justified the righteousness of Jesus and assured us how He

showed kindness to enter through Jericho. Zacchaeus came to know this happy news and wished to see him because of his physical stature; he wanted to climb a tree on the way to see Jesus. Actually Jesus was on his way to the cross. He was going to present himself to the Jews as the Messiah king full filling (Zachariah 9:9).

“Rejoice greatly O daughter of Zion shout O daughter of Jerusalem, behold thy king cometh unto thee”. He is just having salvation lowly and riding upon an ass and upon a colt to foal of an ass. It Jesus was to contest for the office of the president in His time, his advisors would have begged him not to offend either Pharisees or any voter in the public or to show more friendship with the publicans like zacchaeus. We find here the attitude of the sages and the public against the publicans and it is said even the zealots hated the publicans. They were treated as worse than traitors.

All this information underscores it, courage and righteousness of our Lord who was willing to acknowledge this repentant publican publicly, even though we would face accusation from his enemies. Even then Jesus was the friend of publicans and sinners. It also reminds us of the wonderful truth mentioned in john (6:37). All that the father gives me shall come to me and him that cometh to me; I will in no wise cast out”.

As in so many similar cases we can only ask what would the Christian churches have been through centuries. If Jesus had only looked up at Zacchaeus for a disapproving shape of this head and continued down the road until He found a good follower to lodge with that night we can give only immense thanks to our merciful God and cry alone. “What a wonderful savior is Jesus my Lord” Zacchaeus climbing of the tree gives us a clear picture of his abundant faith in Jesus and also to prove himself right before him.

Prior to this incident Jesus came and began to preach the publicans who were looked down upon with wrath by the Pharisees. But His teachings changed many of them and even led them for repentance. Their faith and repentance brought them to God for forgiveness. We have to observe one thing. In the case

of Zacchaeus we must appreciate his strong desire to see Jesus in spite of his stature. His climbing of the tree illustrates to us his unforced faith and his desire to become right before God. It was the holy spirit of God and his sovereign power that awoke him to his need of getting right with God and which drew him to his Lord. These are the important lessons for all of us from the story of Zacchaeus.

When Jesus came to the place where Zacchaeus was on the tree. He saw him and said unto him “Zacchaeus make haste and come down for today I must abide at thy house. And he came down immediately and received Jesus happily. When people like Pharisees saw the situation they all murmured among themselves by saying that Jesus had gone to be a guest of a great sinner. The savior did the right thing even though some people misunderstood him. How Jesus knew about the repentance of Zacchaeus was not clearly mentioned anywhere. Perhaps Jesus must have been told by his disciples in advance or Zacchaeus himself must have sent a letter or message in advance as an evidence of his repentance.

Whatever might be the opinion of different people, one thing is crystal clear. That is a wealthy man Zacchaeus was seeking the forgiveness of God, but not self justification or as a poor man asking for money. The saying of Jesus that he would like to spend a night or a few nights in the house of that chief publican did not impress the self-righteous and self-praising Pharisees any more so, they offered no assistance to the sinners toward getting right with God. Instead of helping them the Pharisees judged and condemned them and these unrighteous hypocrites must have repeated psalm 1 verse 1 all night to each other. When they heard that Jesus spent a night in the house of publican Zacchaeus.

“Blessed is the man that walked not in the counsel of the unGodly, not stranded in the way of sinners, not sitteth in the seat of the scornful”.

Christ has become the repeated cry of condemnation by the Pharisees and his going to the house of Zacchaeus made them restless and He became a target for their criticism. In such conditions, Jesus must have whispered in the

ear of the publican that some hypocrites had been watching His moments and so He would go back to His house. But He came to this world to save the sinners only, and ones a sinner is cleansed by God, Jesus can come in and abide with him. Any way Zacchaeus received Jesus joyfully and it was really a memorable day for him.

As said in (Revelation 3"20) "Behold I stand at the door and knock it any man can hear my voice and open the door I will come into him and will sup with him and he with me".

Jesus gave us a living lesson that once the sinner is cleansed the Lord Himself can sit down and have fellowship with Him. Whatever may be the understanding of Pharisees about Jesus He gave a wonderful truth to all humanity. However, Jesus entering the house of a man, who openly declared his repentance, was not doing anything wrong. He was rather demonstrating truth for the people to realize, what God has cleansed is not a common thing for the public.

Jesus spent that night with Zacchaeus as He had spent His time with the sinful Samaritan woman at Jacobs well. Zacchaeus humbly stood before the Lord and said "behold Lord the half of my goods I give to the poor and if I have taken from any man by false accusation I restore him fourfold. For these words, Jesus said unto him; this very day is salvation come to this house, and added Zacchaeus was also the son of Abraham "for the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was last" (Luke 19:9-10).

This enormous spiritual change in the life of Zacchaeus need not be overstated because he has publicly declared that he would donate half of his property to the poor. Undoubtedly the gentle words of Jesus would have prompted him to part with part of his fortunes into the bag of Judas who was carrying it. At that time Judas must have irritated because these publicans as Tax collectors have collected more money from the public. In the same way Jesus also must directed Zacchaeus to return that money to the public again.



Then Zacchaeus stood up and took both publicly to restore fourfold any money he collected illegally or questionably by false arguments. And according to (Exodus 22:1) such things demanded a five fold repayment for a stolen or fourfold repayment for a stolen sheep. This is just corresponded to David's fourfold restoration. When prophet Nathan confronted him with the matter of "Bathsheba" comparing her to Isaiah's love lamb. (2 Samuel 12:6).

This public pledge by Zacchaeus showed fruits worthy of repentance. The next word of Jesus to him as said in (luke19:9) "this day is the salvation come to this house"..... in light of the words of John the Baptist which may have been well know to all say this repentance and Zacchaeus turning towards God confirmed the truth that he really belonged to the seed of Abraham now spiritually as well as physically. So it is said, bring forth therefore fruits of repentance and begin not to say within yourselves. We have Abraham as our father for I say unto you that God is capable of these stones to rise up children unto Abraham (Luke 3:8).

The Pharisee would have said certainly that a publican or a chief publican such as Zacchaeus was married to Rome, and he was no longer a Jew or son of Abraham by faith or repentance. Jesus Christ here affirmed to born again Zacchaeus publicly, Apostle Paul also affirmed that Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for his righteousness (Roman 4:3) quoting from (Genesis 15:5). It is confirmed that Zacchaeus as the son of Abraham by following Abraham in faith and also spiritually he was called the son of Abraham.

A hot discussion among the Pharisees culminated when Jesus pronounced Zacchaeus as a true son of Abraham. This final declaration resulted closing of this story made the people to shout for centuries across the boundaries. The story of Zacchaeus became a great message for the Christian Missionaries who crossed oceans deserts and jungles with that message. They had even sacrificed their lives in the shadow of the savior's noble purpose to proclaim the "good news" of salvation to those people who were lost.

“For the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10). We can also remember the self righteous rich young ruler where he was departing from Jesus, challenged to give away earthly goods and to follow Jesus.

Jesus said at that time “For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God”. And the people who heard those words whispered among themselves who then can be saved?. Then Jesus said “The kings who are impossible with men are possible with God. In connection with the story of Zacchaeus God made it easier that He can save the rich sinner as well as the poor.

At last this wonderful message was celebrated with a song by thousands of Sunday school children every week in the church which brings joy, hope and encouragement to all sinners who heard the voice of our savior who would like to climb higher in their spiritual life like Zacchaeus. Jesus came to Jericho with His message of salvation. Zacchaeus climbed the physical tree for the time being it was just the beginning of his spiritual climb for his lifelong.

Jesus seeks and knocks at the door of the heart of the sinner. So let us be watchful. When Jesus would come and knock at our door.

## THE GARDEN TOMB OF JESUS



Jesus had done many miracles in his hectic missionary work apart from teaching and preaching but all these miracles and acts of God as mentioned in the Bible, his virgin birth and resurrection became most prominent. But unfortunately these two incidents were denied and attacked by different nonbelievers for centuries. And in recent years creation has joined its hands with the August company of doctrines to be denied. Finally it so happened that resurrection alone stands as the most maligned miracle of the ages. Without proper knowledge of evidence about criticism of the tomb our belief becomes of little important in the resurrection of Jesus.

All this story is connected to the present city Bethlehem a small village at that time in Judaeen hills just about 5 miles away from Jerusalem. It has nothing to provide or worthy for tourists attraction from the city in the present days. The history of Ruth, Noami, Baoz, and also it was the birth place of king David. The background of all these personalities provided some significance to that city

Bethlehem. Added to that the most important cause for Bethlehem to become more popular as world's tourist center is because Jesus was born there. If Jesus was not born there Bethlehem would have remained only as an archeological site for some evidences about king David. Then the tomb of Jesus owes its importance and popularity for one fact that it is the place from which Jesus rose from the dead on the third day and this tomb is completely cave in one of the many hills that make up the city of Jerusalem. We cannot neglect the importance of that city because it is the heart beat of Christianity.

The resurrection is the fundamental doctrine of the new testament. Of all the miracles that took place resurrection is the most vital and wonder of wonders. This is mentioned in the New Testament about 104 times. As a matter of fact, this very resurrection gave life to Christianity and became major religion in the world with the living originator. Other religions like Islam, Buddhism, etc also had their originators and founders but died like ordinary people and only Christianity has living founder. In this connection, apostle Paul said that if resurrection is not true then we as Christians must have become miserable because the foundation for Christianity is faith. But now we need not be miserable as he is risen and proved himself as immortal God. In addition to that God has given that many infaleable proofs of its reality (Acts 1:3). The best news the world ever had come from a graveyard. The resurrection of Jesus is "Amen" for all His promises. Without the resurrection we could have no evidence for putting all our unconditional faith in Him. Even the gospels cannot explain the resurrection but the resurrection itself explains the gospel. For its confirmation let us examine some of the proofs concerning his resurrection.

- Nobody has ever claimed that the body was present and accounted for in the tomb. So the body was missing and the result was infavor of disapprove of about resurrection. It is the undisputable fact that the body had gone from the tomb that very point will give scope to sceptics a difficult time (Mathew 28:6) and (John 20:1-10).
- Some people were anxious to recover the body but never found it. The elders must have spared experienced effort to locate and display the body of

Jesus. We can be sure they left no stone unturned in their search yet it became futile.

- The body was found at last. But it was alive and in normal condition. One preacher said in this connection that “The victim of Calvary is loose and at large.” And in (I Corinthians 15 : 5-8) we read that several people who saw Him alive including 500 others, all saw Jesus after resurrection at a time.
- Then the clothes that were found in His grave also an indelible proof undoubtedly. Apostle John said they were lying. The Greek word for this is “Keimai.” It is used in (Luke 2 : 12) and 16 of Jesus “Lying in a manger.” This meaning here is “Out stretched” like a person who is lying down. The clear picture and implication is that the clothes were positioned like such a way as if Jesus’ body had passed through them and only the clothes were empty. How much time would have taken place to unwrap the body and then to rewrap the clothes without body to give it to a form. If anybody had tried to steal the body why should he risk being found playing with the burial cloths.
- Finally, the most undoubted proof of all is the disciples themselves. The Bible history and tradition all indicate the followers of Jesus (except John the apostle) all died painful martyr’s death for preaching the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If at all they had knowledge of any circumstance they would have certainly spoken of it. As we see in the world some people die for the sake of truth but nobody die in order to save lie. If necessary many more examples can be quoted for the proof of resurrection. Still it has not kept the sceptics from proposing some of the most preposterous and imaginable explanations. And most of them hinge on what is popularly known as “Swoon theory.” According to this concept, Jesus did not die really but swooned or fainted. The swoon theory is only a fanciful tale to explain the resurrection. There is another theory called “Twin theory.” According to that theory the originator of this wild and fanciful tale Mary’s baby was inadvertently switched with another baby who happened to have an identical twin. So the Jesus, Mary and Joseph raised was not the real Jesus but his twin brother Heerome

who did not know anything of his identical twin until he saw his brother on the cross. After he saw his mirror image he realized that Jesus he had heard so much about was no other than his twin brother.

As per the story Heerome steals the body of his brother Jesus and invents a messianic ministry for him by pretending to be the Christ. It would actually take a book to point out all the Biblical historical and logistical errors in this theory. It is amazing that a futile imagination will go to explain about the empty tomb. In light of the wild events today our readers may be interested to know how the Muslims explain the resurrection. After all they placed Jesus next to their prophet Mohammad as a prophet. There are many variations to the central view which is that Jesus was never crucified and so there is no need of resurrection. The main thesis is that God made someone to look like Jesus who was put to death.

A variety of names are offered as to who that unfortunate substitute was. From Judas Iscariot to Pontious Pilot to Simon of Cyrene and even to one of his inner circle. But according to Muslim theory what must have happened to Jesus? A majority of Muslims content that Jesus had escaped the cross and taken up to heaven and one day he will come back to earth and play a central role in the future events. On the basis of some of the alleged sayings of Mohammad the Muslims believe that just before the end of time Jesus will come back to earth. He will kill all the antichrist kill all the pigs and tag rag break the cross destroy the synagogues and churches. Then he will establish the religion of Islam live for forty years and die. After death He will be buried in the city of Medina by the side of prophet Mohammad. We may come across this kind of cock and bull stories. We must try to understand as readers about the shallow and ludicrous men's philosophical thinking about their dynamic truth of the word of God. Apart from that it helps us to appreciate what God has revealed about the tomb in which Jesus was buried. In spite of many adverse sayings about the resurrection there is one undisputable fact both Biblically and historically that is the tomb was empty.

Let us recollect for a while what we know about the tomb. As a matter of fact, there are two tombs in Jerusalem both of them claim the burial of Jesus and resurrection. One is on the western side and slightly towards north of the temple mount. It is known as “Holy Sepulcher” site. It is older and more traditional site. However most of the original mount has been levelled over centuries to accommodate a good number of Basilicas that cover the area. At present, there exists only a small grotto (cave) in a large Basilica in a distance of about quarter mile to the north west of this Basilica remains the second temple commonly known as “Gordon Calvary.” In 1800 A.D. a British military general Sir. Charles Gordon happened to look through the window of his hotel room in Jerusalem. He saw the south eastern face of a mount with three caves that appeared like a skull. He made a thorough investigation and then came to conclusion that it was no other than the place of crucifixion in Biblical days.

Then on the northwest corner he found a tomb that seemed to have all the similarities that are mentioned in the Bible regarding the tomb of Jesus. But for awhile it is left to the discretion of the readers to believe which of the two must have been the real tomb of Jesus. At the same time, everybody would agree in two points

- Both the tombs are empty.
- Of the two locations, the Gordon tomb had the real serenity and worship and one can understand with experience. With this brief information the other historical background we are led to believe and confound that the “Garden tomb” is taken for granted as the real tomb of Jesus and His resurrection. They are many Biblical reasons for our belief.

Prophet Isaiah in 53 : 9 said that “The Messiah would make His grave rich in His death.” And the garden tomb is obviously a rich man’s tomb. It was not only hand hewn but also the place inside was so spacious even two corps can be put side by side. It was a common practice in those days to prefer an existing cave and convert that into a tomb by digging and preparing walls within itself to hold the dead bodies. It is said some of these cave tombs could hold even 60-70

bodies and no space was wasted. Sometimes an area of 11 x 14 feet was provided for two corpses of rich families. Added to that apostle Luke in 23 :53 said it was a tomb that no other body was put prior to Jesus though we cannot see the physical evidence to support our belief and faith or deny the fact from other tombs. We all know our Lord was born from a virgin womb and he arose from the virgin tomb.

Our Lord is really great in arranging events in that manner. Some scholars argued that the tomb chamber alone was very small to allow the body to be prepared as the scriptures indicate. Actually before entering the tomb there will be another room through which one must pass. The tomb is called “Weeping chamber.” It will provide comfortable place for mourning families and friends out of hot sun and inclement weather. The weeping chamber is supposed to be ample in size to accommodate any manner of burial preparations. It is recorded in John’s Gospel that when he and Peter came to know about the empty tomb both of them ran to the spot to witness themselves. John went first and remained outside the tomb. He looked inside and saw empty grave clothes. One can without doubt looking out the side the tomb itself can see the body shelf on which the corpse of Jesus had been laid. What must be the reason for John not to enter the tomb we do not know. He must have done so because he had respect for the dead body of Jesus or he did not want to enter as it was an uncleaned place or he must have waited for the coming of Peter. But Peter came and immediately entered the tomb. And by this act we can understand the impetuous nature of Peter.

Once a speaker commented by saying that as soon as Peter came to know the body of Jesus was not there at the proper place he immediately went there. In Mathew 27 : 60 it is revealed the great stone was rolled across the entrance of the tomb. Generally, it was a common practice to close the entrance of a tomb. It is stated in John 19 : 39 that Nicodemus seemed to have spent about 100 pounds per expensive burial ointments used on Jesus’ burial clothes. It is really strange to know they were robbers of tombs also in those days. In such a case the ointment spent by Nicodemus would have been the great treasure to a tomb



robbers. Generally, closing of a tomb prevents the scavenging animals. Some dogs and wild animals have been habituated to eat the flesh of dead and decomposed bodies mutilate the corpse and cause pungent smell in the surroundings. Sometimes opening of the tombs would be closed to keep the snitch of decaying bodies inside the tomb. It was this tomb the corrupted religious leaders wanted the Romans to shut and seal the tomb of Jesus.

But Pontius Pilate commanded the concern people to watch and keep as far as possible more security. As per the instructions the temple God sealed the tomb by pressing the cord stretched across the stone door into a soft clay on either side of the stone. And some quantity of sand would be used with the clay for any construction purpose. Then on the clay seal of high priest was in printed with a signet. If anybody tried to break the seal he was treated as sacrilege and then received due punishment. In the same way if anybody broke the Roman seal the punishment was death. We have looked into more information about the tomb which is called the garden tomb. In John 19:41 it is clearly stated the tomb was located in a garden. We must have to remember one thing in this context that is the garden we see today in Jerusalem is completely different at the time of Jesus Christ. Any garden today will be beautified with all kinds of wonderful flowers. But this is a story of 2000 years ago.

Some scholars are of the opinion regarding the garden that there must be vineyard in those days. The main reason for our thinking in that way is because of the remains of the largest wine press of ancient nature was found in the city of Jerusalem which is located at few yards from the opening of the tomb. And also a third largest water cistern is located there which would have held in excess of a quarter million gallons of water exactly that required for a vineyard of that size. The last authentic proof is one of the women by name Mary saw Jesus in the same garden after He arose from the dead and thought he was a gardener (John 20:15).

It is also very interesting to know something about the burial customs of Jews in the ancient period. For example, like the Egyptians the Jews used to embalm the dead body if they could afford the expenses. They anointed the

bodies with oil and perfumes and with this process the decaying of the body could be prolonged. But after 18 or 24 months the body had to be inevitably decomposed and became dust leaving only bones. Finally, the family members kept those wasted bones in a stone box called “Ossuary” which means the “Bone box.” The size of the bone box was just the length of a thigh bone. In recent excavations many Ossuaries have been unearthed in the tombs in and around Jerusalem. It has been continued and in 1990 one of such stone box was located in a burial area of a high ranking and wealthy people with a name a very professionally inscribed on its side. The name was “Chaiaphas.” According to the Bible Chaiaphas was the high priest who sat in the judgment at the Jesus’ trials while the bones of the man who sat in the judgment of the “Lord of glory” are still here in a small stone box and the body of man he judged left this world longtime ago.

The “Talmud” is the name of the book of ancient Jews it contained their laws and traditions. It explained about the rabbis of Jesus times who taught their people some strange ideas about death and burial. After death according to their teaching the spirit hovered over the body for three days. They said during those three days it is possible for the spirit to reenter the body and give life to it. If not in the fourth day the physical efforts of death would lead the body for decay making it physically and ceremonially unclean. At that point, the spirit would never reenter the body. This may be one reason Jesus waited until the fourth day to come to the grave of Lazarus. In decomposed condition on the fourth day it is impossible to restore life unless he is a Deity who can give life. But here in the case of Lazarus Jesus is the Deity. There are other customs and traditions worth to mention in this context and it is not wise to conclude without drawing an analogy between resurrection and “Yonkippur” the day of atonement. On that day of the year the high priest used to wear plain white robe like an ordinary priest. There must be some reason for God in ordaining such clothing for such occasion. The reason is when the high priest entered the “Holy of holies” with the blood of sacrificial animal in a bowl he represented the future day on which Christ would shed His blood on the cross of Calvary. Jesus wore white

garments when he was put on the cross and those white garments represented the righteousness of Jesus Christ and this is the only way one can enter the presence of God.

As readers kindly keep the picture of the high priest for awhile in your minds as he was entering the “Holy of holies” (sanctum sanctorum) with the blood of a sacrificial animal in a bowl. There must be a gathering of thousands of worshippers on the temple mount and there was a pin drop silence. At that moment, there arose a critical question in their hearts and minds. The question is what if?

1. What if God rejects the priest as the mediator between Himself and the people?
2. What if the priest had overlooked some ceremonial cleansing?
3. What if he missed some act of purification?
4. What if the animal had some blemish?
5. What if there were some blemish or problem with the blood?
6. What if God rejected the covering blood of the sacrificial animal?

In such conditions their sins would be uncovered. Then the wrath of God might pounce upon them and make all fall dead on the spot. Then naturally such critical situation would force the high priest to sprinkle the blood on the “Mercy seat” immediately as some fault must have been found that caused all dead. As a result, the high priest might lie on the floor of Holy of holies in order to prevent the dying of people. Finally, the white robed priest would come out of the temple to the temple mount. This situation would show God had accepted the priest as a mediator and the blood scarifies as a satisfactory covering of their sins for one more year.

After all their sins were forgiven for another year and they were saved with the mercy of God Almighty they must have enjoyed and celebrated that occasion with Jubilant mood. Let us shift our imagination for awhile from Yonkippur to another Jewish convocation otherwise known as Jewish first feast called “Passover.” Jesus had died a cruel death on the cross. Then His body was kept in the tomb. During that time He was taken by His spirit the blood of

sacrifice into the holy of holies of the heavenlies (Hebrews 9: 11-14, 23-26). Then Jesus presented Himself as the great high priest and the blood of His sacrifice appeared not as a temporary covering but as the eternal atonement for the sins of the whole humanity. If the high priest (Jesus) was rejected or if some fault, some blemish were found in His blood sacrifice then all our sins would have remained unforgiven and the entire humanity should have gone to eternal hell. Likewise the angels too must have wondered why Jesus was still in the grave.

It has been already two days to doubt whether God rejected his death, his blood or whether the wrath of God was about to fall on the unsuspecting word then on the morning of the third day a white robed figure came out of the tomb. His very presence showed a green signal to signify God had accepted Him as High priest and the blood sacrifice. And as a result, salvation was accomplished. When God the son was hanging on the cross He cried “It is finished” (John 19:30) but on the resurrection morning God the father said “Amen” what is the mendable thing occurred on that resurrection morning? The Almighty God put His eternal stamp of approval on the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is certainly an auspicious occasion for all the Christian believers to rejoice themselves. In excitement we observe that precious day once in a year and call it (Easter Sunday) and some renowned scholars suggested this Easter festival must be celebrated 365 days a year and all believers must put their faith, trust and hope on him and him alone for their salvation.

We can see today the garden tomb in Jerusalem without stone door but with wooden door and on the door there is a simple message with a simple signature. The message is he is not here for he is risen again indeed and there are many proofs for that without doubt. Our praise, worship glory and honor must go to the risen lamb of God who is going to come soon as the Lion of tribe of Judah.

## WAS JESUS BORN TO VIRGIN MARY?

God Almighty created the first man out of dust of the earth and then breathed life. After that God created sleep to fall upon man while he was resting. When that man was in deep sleep, God took a rib from his body and created Eve. Abraham was ninety nine years old and Sarah ninety years old when this Godly woman conceived miraculously and after nine months, Isaac was born to her. So, from the dust of earth, from a rib, and from a woman of ninety years, whose womb must have been almost closed due to the age, God created life.

If God is a real God, a wise and sovereign God, who could create the entire universe just with a word from His mouth, then are we not surprised at His wonderful creation? To elevate Him as supreme and omnipotent God, man expects that kind of abnormal things from our God. If God is capable of bringing life into existence from the dust of earth, from a rib and from a dead womb, then we can strongly believe that nothing is impossible to God to make a Godly Jewish young virgin to conceive and deliver the baby Jesus after nine months.

Believers should not be perturbed and dismayed when the unsaved would mock at such things like virgin Mary gave birth to a divine child. Especially the citizens of heaven should not feel the slightest doubt regarding the virgin birth of Jesus, though some unbelievers like Gnostics say such things are unnatural and unbelievable. Let us not become sad by that kind of untrustworthy comments from that type of devil incarnated people and lose our faith and belief that an omnipotent God super- intended a virgin birth as part of His plan to rescue man from the sinful life is without doubt ennobling enriching and librating.

It is still unfortunate and tragic that there are some who called themselves Christians and question the birth of virgin Mary's giving birth to a divine child. Their dwarfish thinking must have prompted them to believe that only through physical union of man and woman the birth of a child is possible. And such people with their faith should not say like this – "Be thou removed and thou cast into sea". (Matthew 21: 21)

The birth of Jesus through virgin is not an option to be considered. It is a vital truth clearly explained in scriptures and that should be embraced by true Christians with their faith. Without the birth of Jesus through virgin Mary, there is no salvation for humanity. Without virgin birth, the death of Christ is nothing more than the vain martyrdom that the Galilean Jew experienced. The Bible is called Holy Scriptures, wherein everything is explained in full details. It is holy because it is the co-operation effort of both God and man. Apostle Peter wrote 'Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit' (2 Peter 1: 21). Only with the influence of the Holy Spirit, holy men gave to the world the Holy Scriptures. It is nothing but an intimate partnership. To be brief, if the Bible is called the Holy Scripture, Jesus must be called the holy child. Jesus is called holy because He is the fruit of the co-operation effort of God and Jewish maiden.

Apostle Luke, in his Gospel mentioned the angelic annunciation of the birth of Messiah in the following way 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of shall be called ' the son of God'. This is also called the intimate partnership of the spirit of God and a chosen young virgin gave us the holy child. The holy child is living logos (Word). The holy Bible is the written logos. Apostle John commenced his Gospel with the following words. In the beginning was the Word (logos) and the Word was with God and the Word was God (John 1:1). Jesus in His flesh and blood is the revelation of heavenly Father. The scriptures are also the revelation of the attributes and works of God.

According to the Biblical history, Mary was the direct descendant of David (Matthew 1:1). Since the Spirit of God came upon her (this subject is too deep and too complicated for a common man like us to comprehend) and her child was called the Son of God. The child to whom virgin Mary gave birth two thousand years ago was without doubt a unique child because Mary was spotless virgin and her child was perfect human being untainted by sin.

As the Spirit of the Lord overshadowed her the child became an undiminished deity. So, the God man finally became divine and fully human.

Even the theologians after breaking their heads over the topic of the unnatural birth of Jesus came to a conclusion and called that ‘hypostatic’ union. What a glorious mystery to believers?

It became a popular saying in certain parts of the world during Christmas season that the birth of Christ to virgin Mary has become a reason for the season. That is to say, without the virgin birth Christmas or incarnation would have become the biggest fraud that has come down in the human history. God created Adam and Eve in His own image and kept them in the Garden of Eden. As they were divine creation they could have intimate communion with the Creator in their perfect holiness. But in course of time they disobeyed God and His commandment their holiness was tested by Satan.

Unfortunately, both Adam and Eve surrendered themselves to the wicked plan of Satan and committed the unforgiving sin. They ate the fruit of the forbidden tree. So by disobeying the Word of God they sinned against the Almighty. Even then if they had repented and asked God’s forgiveness, the story of Adam and Eve would have been different in the Bible. But they did not accept their sin with lame excuses by saying it was the serpent that tricked them to eat that forbidden fruit. So, by disobeying the Word of God, Adam and Eve committed the first sin.

Not only this, they committed the second sin also; that is doing something wrong which is unpardonable and not repenting for that they tried to blame others for their mistakes. Therefore doing something wrong by themselves and blame others for their fault is called the second sin. This is against the Holy Spirit and for such people there is no salvation when God questioned Adam and Eve. Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed Satan but they never accepted their sin. Even though God made both of them in His own image, the consequences of their fall and sin blocked their image and likeness of God.

After they were necked out of the Garden of Eden, they bore children and they bore them in their own image. Adam lived hundred and thirty years and begat a son in his own image. Men are not sinners originally but only after

doing some sinful acts because they are born with a sinful nature what God created was very good, but man made his life very bad by himself. Even John Milton a famous Epic poet in English wrote a wonderful poem about man's disobedience and the result of that sin; the name of that poem is 'Paradise Lost'. It starts with the following lines –

'Of man's first disobedience

And the fruit of the forbidden tree'

It is said this poem was translated into 78 languages in his time and people read this in the place of Bible. In the society man may not require instructions to become bad, but to become good one needs proper guidance and instructions. The history of humanity is the history of outworking of man's sinful nature under Satan and the purpose of God to redeem man by His mercy and grace.

According to some theologians, every man has some symptoms of sin because he is the offspring of Adam and Eve and he possessed that sin nature. But Jesus was exempted from such sin because He was virgin born. We can say about Him that He was holy and separated from all sinners (Hebrew 7: 26).

Matthew in the first chapter of his Gospel listed out the descendants of the royal family of King David who was a Jew; and his genealogy ended with Joseph the betrothed husband of Mary(Matthew 1:16). According to that list the fourteenth descendant of King David lineage was Jeconiah. There was a curse upon him and so he could not become the King. God pronounced a curse upon Jeconiah "Thus saith the Lord write ye this man (Jeconiah) childless a man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David and ruling any more in Judah".

This major curse was enforced upon Jeconiah by God. Actually he had seven sons but none of them nor shall his descendants sit on the throne of David. Here we can see one main problem that is those who were legally eligible to occupy the throne were barred from such occupation because of the curse on



Jacona and Joseph the betrothed husband of Mary. Joseph was a direct descendant of Jeconiah. According to this information although Joseph inherited legal right for the throne of David, because he was in the Kingly line for the throne through Solomon, he lost the right of the throne as the curse started with Solomon and continued with Jeconiah. Therefore Joseph the direct descendant of Jeconiah also became disqualified for the throne of David as the curse continued.

The problem is quite clear now, though it appeared to be critical and unchangeable. If Jesus Christ happened to be the physical son of Joseph, He too must have come under the curse which was pronounced on Jeconiah's seed and in such conditions it could not have been possible even for Jesus to sit upon the throne to rule over Israel and ultimately the world (Revelation 11:15). This complicated issue posed a humanly impossible dilemma and consequently caused three conditions to be met to substantiate the authority of the Messiah.

And these three conditions appeared to be impossible to be fulfilled.

1. To sit on the throne of David and rule over Israel Jesus must be a direct descendant of David in order to satisfy God's promise to David that his seed only sit upon the throne.
2. Jesus also must be the legal son of Joseph in order to inherit the right to sit upon the throne of David.
3. As Jesus could not be physical son of Joseph the curse that God imposed upon Jeconiah had nothing to do with divine birth of Jesus as He was the direct descendant of Jeconiah.

If the critical position had to be dealt with by different writers in their own way in those days, they would have depicted God as erroneous and powerless in creating such unsolvable situation to the entire humanity. As they were writing about God and His wonderful creation they would do only according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and God molded them what to write and how to write. And the infinite God solved that complicated problem with the miracle of virgin birth.

The genealogy of David was shown to Joseph in Matthew chapter 1. Jesus was not the physical son of Joseph. And the scriptures clearly spoke about the point that Joseph was born to Jacob and Timna and Jacob was the descendant of Jeconiah. The parents of Mary were Jachim and Anna; and Jachim was the descendant of Nathan another son of David, a spotless man and finally virgin Mary was from that Nathan. So, Jacob begat Joseph husband of Mary to whom was born Jesus Christ.

The expression of the word virgin is a feminine singular in Greek language. This statement clearly indicates that Jesus was born to Mary alone but not to Joseph and Mary. The Bible also pointed out at the time of Jesus' birth Joseph did not know Mary as his wife. At the same time, Jesus was the legal son of Joseph as he raised Him even though He was not his physical son. As a legal son of Joseph, Jesus inherited the right to the throne of David. Then, there arose another problem. The prophets of Israel, prophesized that the Messiah would be a lineal descendant of David. Again we have to brood over this point how far this could be fulfilled.

We can have the correct answer to this problem from the Gospel of Luke. He gave us the genealogy of Mary mother of Jesus as recorded. According to that information, Mary was also the direct descendant of King David but not through the lineage of Solomon from him came Jeconiah who became a victim to God's curse. Mary was the descendant of another son of King David by name Nathan (Luke 3:23). Therefore, the curse of Jeconiah that caused some hindrance to Joseph did not hinder Mary or her son Jesus.

We can explain briefly in an understandable way that Jesus is the lineal son of Mary and direct descendant of David and deserved his throne with his background. We can conclude that Jeconiah's curse would no way affected Jesus to sit on the throne of David. In the New Testament it is pointed out that Jesus was "virgin born". So it is explained by Apostle Matthew in the following words. "Now all this was done that I might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by a prophet saying "Behold a virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son

and they call His name “Emmanuel” which being interpreted as God be with us” (Matthew 1: 22-23). The prophet mentioned in this context is no other than prophet Isaiah. He wrote the following words about seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus. Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign “Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name “Emmanuel” (Isaiah 7:15).

The word “virgin” is a translation from Hebrew word “almah”. The theologians who were always ready to explain and especially the contemporary Jewish translators who penned to keep Jesus out of the Old Testament seemed to have twisted the meaning of the word “almah”. They said “almah” does not mean virgin but it simply means “a young woman”.

This translation took place about 250 years before the actual birth of Jesus Christ. Seventy Jewish scholars as a team were asked to translate the Hebrew Old Testament in to Greek language and this translation took place in Egypt. Then it was called by the concerned authorities as “Septuagint”. This was also encouraged by the ambitious Emperor Alexander the Great. Whoever he won the battle, he introduced Greek language and culture to those people.

So, in a very short time this Greek language spread into many places including Israel. Added to that, Greek language became part of Jewish business magnets. This became advantageous to Jews to read the original Hebrew Holy Scripture in Greek language. But the Jewish scholars it seems did not do their translation work honestly with devotion and with the support of the Holy Spirit. As a result the translation was not up to the mark and even to some words they gave strange meaning according to their whims and fancies. One example for that is the word “almah” in Hebrew, and they translated that to “a young woman” instead of “virgin”.

At the time of their translation work they must have looked into the Book of Isaiah and the Hebrew word “almah” then Greek word “parthemos”. For these two words, the suitable English translation should have been “virgin” but their translation was “a young woman”. For centuries, millions of people had claimed

the “Aero polis” of Athens to see the ruins of Parthenon. It was called so because of temple of “Athina” a pagan virgin Goddess of wisdom. If the infant child of whom prophet Isaiah spoke was not virgin born then the Jewish translation of Greek made this grave and unpardonable mistake and inexcusable blunder intentionally. In such conditions, we may have to blame the seventy Jewish translators directly for their negligent translations.

We can take it for granted that some attempts have been made to take away some of the precious words concerning to Jesus in their translations from the pages of the Old Testament Scriptures. There is no doubt it was done either by literates who denied the wonderful divine prophecy or by some of the Jews who bluntly rejected and justified themselves their action regarding the Messiah fulfillment of Jesus: ultimately futile and valueless.

Apostle Paul also in his letter to the Corinthians provided the following statement. He wrote “For I deliver unto you, first of all which I also received how that Christ died for our own sins according to our Scriptures. And that he was buried and that he rose again on the third day according to Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15: 3-4).

The cream of all Gospels is about the life of Christ, His ministry, His doing of some miracles to make believe, that He was the Messiah, His death and burial and finally His resurrection. If He had not risen from the dead then there are no believers and no Christianity. If Jesus was not virgin born, the good news would have become bad news for the entire Christian faith. He came to this world to pay our debts that which we could not pay. He died in our place as our substitute for our benefits. So, this is once and for all sacrifice of the Son of God on our behalf, sacrificed fully and eternally the holiness of God. And without virgin birth the sacrifice of Jesus would not have been acceptable. As a result of that His Father would not have raised Him from the dead; and finally all of us must have to die for our sins.

The virgin birth is like the second coming. It is a crucial and glorious part of the body of truth and we call Gospel. If people say, Jesus died for our sins and

reject His virgin birth then it amounts to our faithfulness. The Scripture also said “Believe on the Lord Jesus and they shall be saved” (Acts 16:31). He came for the purpose of sacrificing Himself for our sins. He is coming again as a lion of Judah to consummate the salvation of the saved; Judge the wicked and bring in an age of righteousness Justice and peace.

We can finally conclude this topic with the following four points.

1. The Bible clearly teaches us about the virgin birth of Jesus.
2. Without virgin birth the death of Christ on Calvary would not have paid the prize to redeem man from the consequences of his sin.
3. Virgin birth is a critical doctrine an integral part of the Gospel message and so it must be boldly proclaimed by all those who truly love the Lord and His Word.
4. The virgin birth is not a myth- it is a divine miracle and Biblical faith – So every Christian must glorify the Lord Jesus with faith and prayer.

## GENEALOGY OF THE KING OF KINGS

We can find in the first verse of the first chapter of the first book of New Testament with the following wonderful words. We may also call the book of the generation of Jesus (yeshua which means “savior”) Christ, (the messiah means, the “Anointed one”). The son of David, the son of Abraham (Mathew 1:1). We need not doubt about the astonishing words because they spoke about the marvelous incident that occurred thousands of years ago.

God foretold about “the seed of the woman” who would crush the head of the serpent and when that seed was physically present in His creation (Genesis 3:15). A close Jewish observer, during the first century A.D., must have studied the scriptures of Israel, and certainly understood about the coming of Messiah. Had the Jewish people lived with longing hope of the coming messiah, then we also today felt happy about the genealogy of Jesus as mentioned by Mathews in his gospel is true. A genealogical record of the Jewish people was carefully preserved in a feeding called the “house of records” near the temple mount. This record house was considered to be the most important because of three reasons.

- 1) They used to settle all important legal matters regarding land inheritance rights within the families.
- 2) The records were used as a proof card authentic about the priesthood that they must be the real descendants of Aaron. According to the Mosaic Law.
- 3) The record was used to substantiate all legitimate heirs to the throne of Israel because it was decided upon try God Himself that the legal heir had to come from the tribe of Judah and from the royal family of king David only

Unfortunately, “the house of records” and King Solomon temple were set on fire by the Romans in 70 AD. To speak the truth, if the promised seed of the woman (messiah) did not appear before the destruction of the temple and

genealogical records in 70 AD the legitimate claiming of messiah could never have been legally satisfied and searching for Messiah after 70 AD. That is to say, searching for Messiah after 70 AD. Would have become humanly impossible.

As we see in the Bible, the Pharisees Sadducees and Herodias challenged the teaching and actions of Jesus Christ on every possible occasion. Their main purpose was only to discredit the image of Jesus before the Jewish multitudes. But those hypocrites could not challenge the genealogy of Jesus because it has enough proof to substantiate His right to Davidic throne was irrefutable and always available to see personally in the “house of records” and believe.

Apostle Matthew presented the authentic information to all his readers with full details of the genealogical tree of begots ( Matthew 12:16) then he gave a brief description of the genealogy of Jesus in the following words.

“so, all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the carrying away unto Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations (Matthew 1:17).

As Matthew mentioned the true fold reference of fourteen generations was much decreased. Though Matthew stressed more emphasis on this verse of scripture it remained untouched by the commentators. In the first place, the genealogy of Christ was Israel from Abraham to David where it momentarily paused, because David was first divinely appointed king in the line of Messiah. He reigns of king David was considered by Israel as the golden age of his time and also in the history of Jews.

As the second point the genealogy was traced from King David unto Babylonian captivity, where in again, there was momentarily pause, because the Babylonian captivity brought to a half the reign of David i.e. Dynasty and begins the times of gentiles. The times of gentiles were a period when there was no descendant of David in to messianic line was available to rule over Israel. Therefore, during that period only gentile nations, one after another happened to rule the Holy land with her capital Jerusalem.

This period of pagan rule, was graphically depicted in Nebuchadnezzar dream of an awesome image and its meaning was wonderful interpreted by prophet Daniel (Daniel 2:36-45). Daniel spoke about four gentile nations in this connection, which would rule the holy land. They were Babylon Persia Greece and Rome and all of them consecutively rule Jerusalem the Babylonian captivity took place in 586 BC. And that period was called the worst of times in the history of Jews. The Jewish nation (Israel) which was supposed to teach the word of one true God to the whole world was now controlled and ruled by idolatrous pagan nations filled with sin.

God could not tolerate the wickedness of His chosen people, and the sin committed by them. So he took revenge by handing over them to pagan rules as a punishment and for their repentance.

The third point is, the genealogy pointed out that from the Babylonian captivity to the birth of Christ where it pauses one more time, because after six hundred years of gentile rule a descendant of King David and a rightful heir to the throne was born and his coming was foretold at the dawn of human history. According to the prediction he would be born to a virgin in a small village at that time called Bethlehem, which is just five miles away from Jerusalem.

This miraculous and unforgettable event provided to Israel, the most glorious and promising of times. The very presence of the Jewish king the rule of gentiles that continued for centuries came to an end. This is the real important message apostle Matthew wished to give to his readers to understand in the very beginning of his gospel and in the very beginning of the New Testament. If we see the early history we can find how the sovereign God had chosen Israel to be just an instrument through which to seed of the woman would come into this world. Inspire of many attempts made by Satan, throughout the Old Testament era, to keep away the “seed” from coming by destroying the Jewish nation from which He would come, and now He was present among His people. This was understood on the most appropriate occasion to shout “Hallelujah” “Praise ye the Lord”.



Israel was now called to do one thing. It was not required to do great scarifies but one thing most essential. There was no other way for the people if at all they wanted to receive the blessings of God. That essential thing is they had to recognize and accept their Messiah Jesus Christ, and trust Him as their savior and king. Abraham (believed) amend the words of God, concerning the coming 'seed' and it (his faith) counted unto him for righteousness. Two thousand years later Abraham's descendants were called upon to show the same faith as their patriarch.

The credentials of Jews as the promised seed was to bring salvation to the whole world. His genealogy as earlier noted was available to everybody to examine in the house of records. He was born in Bethlehem the city of king David as the scriptures foretold the Messiah would (Micah 5:2).

“He was born of a virgin” as prophet Isaiah said, He was born at the right time as revealed by the praise chronology given by prophet Daniel (Daniel 9:24-26). “He performed miracle which the scripture attributed to the Messiah, when he appeared”. In spite of the writings of Moses, and the sayings of different prophets of Israel, the Pharisees and Sadducees refused to believe and accept that the seed of Abraham and the son of God was in their midst already, who wished to bring blessing to Israel and the world.

The Jewish leaders were focusing more on the coming of Messiah who would rule the kingdom with power and glory. But they did not give any creditability to the humble Nazarene who was born in a manger in a stable in Bethlehem. The Jews completely overlooked the truth that the suffering of the first coming had to precede the glory of His second coming. The prophets of Israel also reminded them time and again that the lamb had to deal with the sin first and then as the join of Judah He had to establish His kingdom and rule.

With their own understanding about the Messiah many orthodox Jews awaited many centuries for the coming of messiah and ignored totally the fact that He had come already and for many centuries at the time of Passover feast. Each year they had been waiting for the coming of Elijah prophet to announce

about the coming of the Messiah. When the prophet did not come on any Passover festive occasion they hoped and comforted themselves by saying Elijah would come next year Passover feast to announce the coming of Messiah but they never realized and repented that He had already come and living with them.

Most of the Jews unlike their patriarch Abraham, and unlike their greatest king David, refused to believe the word of God as it is and what the prophets of Israel had foretold. (Isaiah 6:9-10; 53:1-3). Even the apostle John told his people with heavy and painful heart that “He came unto his own” (creation) and his own nation received him not. Through out the Old Testament, the Satan had been trying his best to destroy the Jewish nation from which Messiah would come to crush his head. But God was faithful to all his promises and so controls all the attacks at every stage and protected the nation.

The nation underwent so much humiliation but still gave birth to the promised seed ( Jesus Christ) in the midst of corruption and treachery of its leaders who finally played important role in his marvelous. At last with the crucifixion of Christ, Satan must have reasoned within himself or painfully told “I tract your checkmate” means “your king is dead” with the death of Jews on the cross, Satan must have thought that there was no one to crush his head.

But Satan was actually prematured in his assessment of the power of Jesus. He was not at all “checkmated”. He had one more move that must thrill the heart of the believers with endless pause. He shed his blood on the cross for our sins, as a penalty. Eternally satisfied the holiness of His father and rose from His grave on the third day. He conquered death. So, Satan was miserably defeated by the lamb, in His first coming. And this Satan well again receives the fatal head injury by the Lion of Judah at His second coming.

At the same time, the ruling of Jerusalem by the gentiles would continue till the allotted time by God is fulfilled and till the rightful king to the throne of David come. This could be fulfilled only in His second coming; as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. And about that day the Lord Has said;

And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon me when they have received and they shall mourn for him as one mourned for his only son and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first born. In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness (Zechariah 12:10; 13:1).

Then in 70 AD. Jerusalem was captured and the holy temple on Mount Zion destroyed. As a result of this unfortunate event most of the Jews left Jerusalem and scattered into many parts of the earth. At that time Constantine of Babylonian Empire happened to rule Jerusalem for certain period during fourth century A.D. he embraced Christianity with his mother Helionia and did wonderful things for the spreading of Christianity. In nutshell he built four churches, made Sunday as Sabbath day instead of Saturday abolished cross punishment and so on. In seventh century A.D. "Islam" a recently emerged religion moved towards west from Arabia in military conquest and ruled Jerusalem for some period. After Islamic rule Syria, Egypt and Iraq ruled Jerusalem for some period. Then for about two centuries Jerusalem was ruled by crusaders who came from England, France and Germany. The first crusades began in 1099 and continued their power until they were driven out in 1291 AD. The crusaders called themselves Christians but there was not even an iota of Christianity in their regular life. Once again Egypt, ruled the Holy land for about two centuries after this came the Turks who stayed for long time. It continued for four centuries. From 1517 to 1917 the Ottoman and the Turkish Empire ruled the Holy land.

Then during the first world war the Turkish people and Germans joined together and fought against the British, but utterly defeated since then that is from 1917 to 1947 Jerusalem was under the control of the British government and finally Israel was declared independence.

Due to the reign of different countries the Jews in Jerusalem and other places left their home land and scattered into many places of the world and experienced the intensity of persecution and humiliation as nobody would have in the history God must have taken revenge against them in that way and even

showed them hell in this life itself, for about two millennia they found no rest either to their body or to their soul. Moses prophesied and described clearly those days in the following words.

“And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people from one end of the earth even unto the other and there thou shalt see other Gods which neither thou nor thy fathers have known even wood and stone. And among those nations shalt thou find no case, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest for the Lord shall give thee a trembling heart and failing of eyes and sorrows of mind. And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee and thou shalt fear day and night and shall have none assurance of the life (Deuteronomy 28:64-66).

Then let us see how God took revenge against the Jews. In 1096 as many as 12,000 Jews were killed in Germany within three months. In 1290 Jews were mercilessly vanished from England. In 1309 Jews were vanished from France. In 1348 Jews were blamed for the European plague. In 1492 both “Ferdinand and Isabella” planned to make Spain completely a catholic nation.

In such conditions Jews were forced either to convert themselves and Baptized or they must be killed or imprisoned or driven out of Spain. At that time it was estimated that about 1, 10,000 Jews had to flee from Spain for their lives. Like that Jews were driven away from one place to another. They had no protection and no shelter. They were like ‘gypsies” (wanderers always without a permanent place). In addition to that they had to face even robbers and murderers frequently. They were the people finally, without an inch of the land of their own anywhere on the earth when they were in such, pathetic and helpless situation they had to face another shocking rumour that spread against them, which became a common talk among people. The shocking news was that Jews were killing gentile infant children and their blood was used in the observance of Passover.

Jews were after asked to wear a type of badge for their identification. The women had to wear or keep bells at the bottom of their dresses. Regarding their livelihood, the Jews used to lend money for interest merchandising, shoe repair

and frequently managing of wealthy estates. In 1516 the first ghetto where the Jews were gathered together and placed in a restricted area was established in “Venice.”

Then in the beginning of nineteenth century the largest Jewish population was found in “Russia” and these Russians started an infamous program called an organized massacre of Jews. In course of time this programs was implemented and as a result about 500 Jewish villages were affected through 1200 programs and with their plan more than 60,000 Jews were killed and many more times of that member were wounded.

Then during 1900 and 1945 the greatest genocide of the world took place in Germany. It was perhaps the most important in the history. This happened under the leadership of “Adolph Hitler” a dictator of Germany and it was the time of Second World War. It is said about 60, 00,000 (six million) Jews wee snuffed out in the death-camps, gas chambers and firing squads. Many nations of the world would have rescued and saved a good number of fleeing European Jews with their power and influence.

But no nation came forward to take such risk. No nation took any action and even refused to increase the immigration quotes. So that they could open their borders to help the disparate Jews. So for nineteen hundred years most of the nations of the world must have written at their borders “No Jews wanted”. Then in 1947 after the Second World War, the British government could not control the conflict between the Arabs and Jews at that time which was called Palestine.

Then for a suitable solution their conflict was referred to the recently formed “united nations organization” As a result of the appeal to the UNCO. Israel was declared independence on May 8 1948.

This happened for the first time in nineteen hundred years. But immediately the very next day, six Arab nations attacked Israel by dishonoring the resolution of the U.N.O. and this was the root cause for the present more than sixty years conflict between the Palestinians and Jews. Yet the U.N.O

remained silent on this issue and in the mean time Israel had to fight five major wars with “wicked terrorist’s attacks. In such critical situation, the U.N.O. “European union” “NATO” and many nations of the world supported those people who wanted to destroy Israel.

It seemed Satan the father of lies was behind all these tragic events. Added to that all the nations kept their embasis in tell Aviv instead of Jerusalem, thought were the capital of Israel. The reason why other nations did not keep their Embassies in Jerusalem has great significance it is no surprise to the Bible readers and the word of God. The Lord Jesus Christ said and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the gentile nations until the time of the gentiles be fulfilled. (Luke 21:24).

The greatest burning issue today among the believers is this- who is going to rule the world from Jerusalem for Anti-Christ or True Christ. If the Jewish people were assimilated or annihilated in the Old Testament Jesus Christ a descendant of Abraham and David would not have been born and we could be without savior dying in our sins. In the same way if the Jewish people are without their own nation called Israel, at the end to the age, and the capital city Jerusalem, then the believers would have been left without a blessed hope.

The blessed hope is our Lord’s guarantee. Whether we passed from this life or remained alive at his second coming, we will be without doubt resurrected or ruptured to be with our Lord. But our blessed hope will be materialized only after the return of our Lord. Jesus will return as a legitimate heir the legitimate throne over legitimate people.

As a bonafide king of Israel Christ will be king of all kings and Lord of all Lords finally, no gentile nation would rule Israel but Israel through her king will rule all nations (the whole world). When Jesus returns as the lion of Judah, Satan will be thrown into the “lake of fire” and there will be a new heaven a new earth and a New Jerusalem. Then Jesus will not turn the world upside down but he will turn the world right side up.

## THE FOUR COVENANTS OF GOD

According to historical information, (data) when people or nations come to an agreement they used a number of different methods in order to materialize that agreement. In such arrangements and methods, some are formal and legal and others are informal and personal. Among such various methods used to deal or seal are Treaties, accords, contracts, compacts, promises pledges and covenants.

So when the everlasting and Almighty God chose to enter into a special relationship with man, He preferred to use the method of covenant. If you look into the Bible carefully, we can find especially God entered into four major covenants with the nation of Israel. And each of the four covenants was directly made through Biblical history's most famous and important personalities.

As a matter of fact it is not at all an overstatement to note that an understanding of these covenants - how they would function and then what must be the meaning of them. That is the most important and ultimate priority of the whole humankind. With these covenants, God committed Himself to do certain things in relation to man. These covenants had directly influenced the life of man on earth. These covenants have been properly operated at any place whether the people are aware of them or not. If people wholeheartedly embrace them, the covenant would bring them peace joy and eternal life through the blessing of God. If people reject these covenants, they would experience sadness, turmoil, cursing and eternal separation from God.

Among the four covenants, the first one was called Abrahamic covenant. God made this covenant with Abraham the father of Jewish nations. The second, covenant was called the Mosaic covenant. God made this with Moses the lawgiver to Israel. The third one was called Davidic covenant and this was made with David the king of Israel, and a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). The

fourth covenant was called the new covenant. This was unique of its kind, it was instituted by the son of God Jesus Himself.

The first three covenants are made during the period of the Old Testament and the fourth one was made by Jesus Christ at the time of the New Testament. It was in the following way. Jesus said for this is my blood of New Testament (covenant) (Matthew 26:28). It is no exaggeration at all if we said that within this sphere of the Abrahamic, Mosiac, Davidic and the New Testament, men and nations find their history and eternal destiny.

In the Bible the word covenant came from the Hebrew word “berit”. The word itself means to cut or to divide. These covenants anomaly entered into in connection with a solemn ceremony, which centered upon the death of an animal.

God said to the prophet Jeremiah , and I will give the men that had transgressed my covenant which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me. When they cut the calf in twine and passed the parts thereof, (Jeremiah 34.18) and also (Genesis 15.9 to 17). In order to institute a covenant, an animal has to be cut and its pieces served and sent into two lines. This would be done because the animal must be killed in ancient Israel and the meaning of the very word covenant is to cut. But today we talk of making covenants and the essence spoke of cutting covenants because blood was the very essence of life had to be spilled.

Hence in the words of the Lord, for this is my blood of the New Testament. For 2000 years animals were sacrificed. All the sacrifices pointed out to Jesus the once and for all sin. His death on the cross instituted the New Testament or covenant. In most of the basic terms of Biblical covenant is a clear statement of God’s purpose and intention expressed in terms that God by solemn oath to perform what he has promised through all this covenants.

Abrahamic covenant - the covenant of Abraham was the oldest one of the four major covenants. If you consider the face value of each of them, Abraham ie



covenant ranked first in its importance. It would be first in the sense that in this covenant we can find the source of the next three covenants that followed it. It is certainly an exaggeration to say that all spiritual blessings from their fountain head back to this covenant only including eternal life. Because of the covenant, God made with Abraham, he became father of all believers. Jews as well as Gentiles. All of them finally became one in Christ

The Lord first appeared to Abram (later called Abraham) while he was still living in the city of UR along the shores of the river Euphrates. God asked Abraham to leave everything including his kith and kin and the heritage of his father's land to go to a distant place He would show him Genesis 12.1. In those days, traveling such a long distance was not an easy thing yet the greatness of Abraham was that he never said anything against God's command He simply obeyed His word.

So in his command, God gave Abraham five promises as listed below

- God promised Abraham that He would make him a great nation. We all know Abraham had no heir at that time.
- He told Abraham that He would bless him abundantly and with that blessing only he became a wealthy man.
- God promised Abraham that He would make his name great. Accordingly even today Abraham had a great reputation among the followers of Islam who considered him as one of the prophets. Among Christians who form the special heritage he was the embodiment of great faith. And among Jews he was called the father of their nation.
- He promised Abraham that He would be a blessing. As he was blessed by God that blessing had showed to others through the Lord Jesus Christ whose humanity was found in Abraham.

He promised Abraham that He would bless those who blessed them and curse those accused him ( Genesis 12.3) and this principle can be traced through history to man and nations in relation to their treatment of the Jewish people.

Anyhow, sometime after the death of his father at Haran, Abraham with his wife and nephew Lot reached the land that God directed them. The name of that land was canaan which was inhabited by wicked people at the time called canaanits. But in the Bible it is said Abraham passed through the land into the place of sichem unto the plain of Morea. And the canaanits were there in the land. The place which Abraham came for the first time was located between Mount Ebal and Mount Jerzim near the modern city of Nablus.

After Abraham reached the promised land, God appeared to him for the second time. The Bible this event is described and recorded with minimum number of words, and the Lord appeared to Abraham and said unto thy seed will I give this land there builded he an altar unto the Lord who appeared unto him, (Genesis 12:7). This is really wonderful that this land is at the very center of Biblical Judea and Samaria where God appeared to the father of the Jewish nations and promised the land to his seed to receive as an everlasting inheritance.

Again God appeared to Abraham for the third time and He reiterated the promise of a land. And the Lord said unto Abraham after that Lot was separated from him. Lift up now thine eyes and look from the place where thou art Northward and Southward Eastward and Westward for all the land that you seeist to thee will I giveth, and to thy seed forever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, Then they shall also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land and the length of it and in the breath of it for I will give it unto thee. (Genesis 13.14 to 17).

The Lord appeared to Abraham for the fourth time. In the meantime the patriarch Abraham had to fight with four powerful kings of the east. They happened to take Lot his nephew as captive with his property. And Abraham

successfully fought with them and returned home. He happened to meet the high priest Melchizedec on the way who was also called King of Salem. The priest blessed him and served him bread and wine. And as a memory Melchizedec gave him his shepherd stick also. In return Abraham gave tiths to the priest.

After he returned with great victory over the enemy, he pledged to ELEOYM the (most high God) and refused spoils of the battle. But as time went on Abraham began to think seriously whether he was hasty and foolish enough to refuse the spoils of the battle acknowledging the most high God as his master. Then one day God appeared to Abraham in a vision and told him that he should not be afraid of anything because He was a shield and would protect him from all dangers. God also said he did not make any mistake in taking pledges with loyalty to ELEOYM as he was always protecting him.

Regarding the war spoils, Abraham refused to take, but God said he would get greater rewards for rejecting the spoils. For what all God promised Abraham's response was unique and important testimony of faith from anywhere in the Scripture. God said, and the believer in the Lord's promise of the seed from his own body that would eventually become as numerous as stars of heaven and God counted Abraham's faith for righteousness.

The word believed in the expression and "he believed in the Lord" came from Hebrew root from which we get the word Amen. So literally it can be said Abraham Amened or affirmed the Lord's promise of a seed that should come from his own Loins and through the word he would experience blessing. In addition to the promise of the seed, God promised Abraham some land as well.

And he said unto him "I'm the Lord that brought thee out of Ur the Chaldies to give thee this land inherited (Genesis 30.710).

Abraham thought for a while and asked the Lord again that he wanted some affirmation a covenant as a proof of his promise. As an answer to question of Abraham, God asked him to kill some animals and cut them into two pieces.

Then God caused a deep sleep to fall on Abraham while and he was in deep sleep the presence of the Lord who was there in the form of a smoking furnace and the burning lamp the glory of God passed between the cut pieces of animals.

The covenant cut in blood was official substantiation of God's promise to Abraham of a nation. Israel of the seed would come through that nation and a blessing would follow to people from every kindred tongues and tribes who led the patriarch himself and also who would believe in God's word and provision for sin through Christ's sacrifice on Calvary.

Abraham's falling into a deep sleep supernaturally imposed in God alone passed through the slaying and cutting of animals. All those were the clear indications as God alone had passed between the slaying and the severed sacrifice. The main point here is neither the patriarch nor his descendents had to do anything to keep the covenant to be more effective and binding upon God. Therefore that might be called unconditional covenant. It is a critical point to know faith in the covenant was the requisite qualification for the participation in the promised blessing of the covenant.

Actually lineal descendent of Abraham Isaac and Jacob did not bring blessing as a worshipper had to exhibit faith in the provision of God's covenant. In the later days Abraham demonstrated his unchangeable faith in God's promise by showing his willingness of offering his son Isaac who also showed his willingness to be offered as sacrificed to God.

God was very much pleased with the willing obedience of Abraham as evidenced by his faith and God took oath on his servant himself because no one was greater than him. He sovereignly gave promises to Abraham with covenant and then as a direct result of Abraham's faith God did unnecessary but wonderful things of guaranting His promises with oath. He said to Abraham by myself have I sworn saith the Lord (Genesis 22.16).

Even the author of the epistles to the Hebrews gave a wonderful description of God's promises and His oath to Abraham. Therefore according to this author, "The hope set" before us is the return of Christ to consummate the blessing promised in the Abrahamic covenant. So all the spiritual blessings that men have known for the last 4000 years every joy and confidence all believers in the church possessed so far are all completely depending upon the covenant which God had made with the Father of the Jewish people Abraham .

According to the Scripture Jesus Himself became the promised seed from the loins of Abraham. So whatever spiritual beliefs the believers have been experimenting are only because of the unconditional character of Abrahamic covenant.

Mosaic covenant - The second covenant called Mosaic covenant which took place a little more than four hundred years after the Abrahamic covenant. The first covenant was made with Abraham the patriarch of the Jewish people before the existence of their nation. But this second covenant was made with the nation itself. Jacob had 12 sons and their families altogether 70 souls went to Egypt for their survival because of the famine at that time.

Joseph their brother was in a very high position and they could prosper well. But after some years all the descendents of Jacob became slaves because the new Pharaoh did not know who Joseph was.

Yet God did not forget his chosen people and decided to liberate them from the affliction of slavery in Egypt as per the covenant God made with Abraham. God appeared to Moses at the burning bush and said I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt and I am come down to deliver them. (Exodus 3-7,8).

The Jews were really peculiar people. They forgot the God of their forefathers who had been guarding them and began to worship Egyptian heathen Gods and Goddesses who were approximately 80 in number. They were

uneducated and dusty to look at. So the Hebrews meaning to Jews was “dusty ones” and at that time people understood them like that.

Now the condition became very pathetic and hope against hope. Since the time of Abraham more than 400 years passed and nobody wanted them on the earth. But God said they are my people, He had not forgotten them. He had not forgotten His covenant with Abraham. He remembered the promise through the nation of Israel and the nations of the world would be blessed. So God entrusted this noble task to Moses to deliver Israel from slavery with His mighty hand. For some centuries and some generations of them remained as slaves without education and worst of all they forgot Yahweh which is God of their forefathers.

Anyway such neglected and unwanted stuff was brought to Mount Senai by Moses. These people from slavery in Egypt came to the desert and from the desert they would become a nation in the promised land of Canaan.

Then the process of making them civil, moral, ceremonial, religious and stability to the mixed multitude began in the wilderness. They would finally enter the promised land promised to Abraham and his seed in due course.

Then the God of their forefathers entered into a second covenant with his people. Since Moses was divinely appointed leader for this people the covenant could bear his name the Mosaic covenant. And Moses is also known as the lawgiver.

The main structure of Mosaic covenant was not unknown to the people of his time. In ancient Middle East, the covenant was made between the ruler and the subject the people. According to history, these agreements are known as Suzerainty treaties. The major components in a covenant between the ruler and the Mosaic covenant and its God and the subjects the Jews are conspicuous in the Scripture.

- 1) This covenant had a preamble and the author of this covenant was identified in the following verse. God said “The Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt” and out of the house of bondage (Exodus 20.2)
- 2) This covenant had historical prologue it is dealt with the activities of the ruler on behalf of its people and why they wanted to enter into His covenant. You have seen what I did unto the Egyptians and how I bear on Eagle wings and brought you. Now therefore yee will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant then yee shall be a particular treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine. (Exodus 19.4-5)
- 3) This covenant had stipulations. These are the principles that control between the Lord and His people. This covenant contained and included the 10 commandments and laws in general. As a matter of fact the ancient Rabbi said there was a total of 613 laws given to Israel by God.
- 4) This covenant had the promise of blessings and cursings. In this part blessings are promised to the people if they hear and obey His instructions and if not they would be cursed. Blessing indicates everlasting life and goodness where as cursing indicates death and badness.
- 5) This covenant had an oath which is blended with pledge on the part of people to observe everything in this covenant. Moses came down from God on Mount Sinai and told them everything that God wanted to and also about the judgment. And people in one voice said “All the words the Lord had said will we do”. (Exodus 24.3.)

This shows people wholeheartedly accepted the covenant and what it contained. The covenant of Abraham and Moses were confirmed in blood. Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on people and said, “Behold the blood of covenant which the Lord has made with you concerning all these words.”

The Devidic covenant – This third Biblical covenant is called Devidic covenant.. As per the Biblical history the 12 tribes of Israel joined together and formed into a nation. And David would happen to defeat the warlike people called Jebusites. Who dwelt in the middle of the land of Israel. Then David fortified the city of Jebusites and renamed the city as “City of David which became his capital”. The King Hiram of Tyre provided to King David beautiful cedar wood, carpenters and masons and with that help David built the Royal Palace.

Now the King planned to bring the Ark of covenant which was taken away by the Philistines at the time of high “priest Eli” and then it remained in the house of Abinadab. The earlier defeat of Israel army by the Philistines and loss of covenant had clearly gives us the idea that God’s presence and blessings have been withdrawn from them. But David with his great military defeated the Philistines and got a wonderful victory over them. Then he thought that God’s blessing came back to the nation and this truth prompted him to get back the Ark and keep it in the center of the Capital city. Accordingly the ark was brought and housed in the tabernacle that the King provided.

Then the seed of concept began to develop in the heart and mind of David. And it came to pass when the king sat in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies then he said to Nathan the prophet “ now I dwell in the house of cedar a posh palace but the Ark of God dwelleth within curtains in the tabernacle a portable and temporary house. (Samuel II 7: 2)

Finally David wished to build the temple to his God to dwell in. He remembered how all heathen nations had their magnificent temples to their dieties and felt much. He understood that those God’s were weak and perverted. They were made of stones. They could not see nor move.. They were lifeless and unable to deliver in times of need. King David realized that his God was a holy one of Israel a true and living God. He thought the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had no permanent house. He sincerely decided to build the great Temple in which his God could dwell in the midst of his nation.



But God informed through the prophet Nathan as David would not be permitted to build the house for Him. God declared that only his son Solomon would build God's temple. Amazingly God said he would build a house for David more than that in eternal Kingly dynasty. So God said "When thy days be fulfilled and thou shall sleep with thy fathers before throne will be established for ever" (Samuel II 7.12 - 16) This amazing promise included the following facts.

- 1) David's son would succeed him on the throne and establish his kingdom.
- 2) Instead of David, Solomon would build God's temple.
- 3) Solomon's throne would be established for ever.
- 4) If Solomon sinned there would be an appropriate punishment for him but God's Mercy joy and loyal love would endure forever.
- 5) David's house, kingdom and throne would be established for ever.

But ultimate fulfillment of promise to David of a house, kingdom and throne which remain forever would be successful only at the end of the age in connection with Christ's second coming and his millennial kingdom. As prophet Nathan said, King Solomon built the costliest house to God in the world in seven and a half years.

But to his bad luck Solomon committed great sin by taking many heathen women as wives. So God punished him by dividing his kingdom into two in 922 BC as the northern kingdom of Israel with 10 tribes and Samaria as their capital, and the southern kingdom of Judea with two tribes and Jerusalem as their capital.

Then the northern kingdom of Israel was taken into captivity by the Assyrians and with that they were spread into different places and as a result they completely forgot the God of their forefathers.

The southern royal kingdom continued for another 136 years. During that short period about nineteen kings of David lineage ruled that kingdom.

And out of them only eight kings ruled as God wished but the other 11 kings became very wicked and caused God's anger.

So in 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon attacked this land and destroyed the city and took away all the costly vessels from the Temple and also many intelligent people were taken as captives. With that memorable incident all the Davidic rule came to an end in Jerusalem. Since then the northern and southern kingdoms were in the control of Gentile rulers as clearly written in the Scripture.

It is really astonishing to see from that day until the present history for a period of 2600 years no divinely appointed king of the tribe of Judea the family of David ruled over Israel.

Yet God is faithful to his covenant promise. At the same time people are aware of events that have been occurring around the world and particularly in the middle east. From the human perspective the world is becoming out of control, from the divine perspective always being prepared for the coming of "The Messiah" who is from the tribe of Judea in the family of David.

His name is "Wonderful counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting father, and Prince of peace". He was soon end the time of Gentiles nations and bring peace and blessing to the earth. As mentioned in the last book of the Bible "And one of the elders saith unto to me weep not behold the lion of the tribe of Judea the root of David had promised to open the book and loose the seven seals thereof. (Revelation 5.5)

Jesus has final authority on the planet Earth so He said of himself in the last chapter of the Bible "I Jesus have sent mine angels to testify unto you these things in the churches the root and offspring of David and the bright morning star" (Revelation 22.16) We should not forget this eloquent and wonderful testament of God's faithfulness in fulfilling the promise He made in the Davidic covenant.

The new covenant - The son of God sat down in the upper room on Mount Zion on the night before He was crucified. It was the Passover day then all Jews were observing that with sanctity. Jesus was also with His followers doing the same. And Dr. Luke describes this event in the following way ‘And when the hour was come He sat down and the 12 apostles with Him. And He said unto them with desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer” (Luke 22.14,15) The expression with desire I have desired is a strong idiom. Its literal meaning is with great or strong desire.

The words of the Lord can be understood in this way with great desire I have desired to eat this. The lamb that was slain in Egypt on the first Passover did not die in vain. With great faith the blood was applied to the door posts and lintels thereby the first born of each and every family experienced redemption.

Jesus took bread on the Passover day, blessed it and gave it to the disciples. Then he said take, eat this is my body and the bread was unleavened .

It comprised three essential elements of the ancient passover along with the passover lamb and bitter herbs. For about 1500 years for Moses until Jesus Christ the Jews have been killing the animals as the memory of the first Passover. But Jesus Christ realized this fact on the next day.

He would die as the Lamb of God who takeeth away the sin of the world and the four footed lamb is no longer required. The death of Jesus would be infinite in worth and eternal induration. It would not require any repeating.

Jesus therefore took the unleavened bread from the Passover table blessed it broke it and gave it his disciples and said “take eat this is my body” (Matthew 26.: 26) The lamb became unnecessary since then and unleaven bread which spoke of sinlessness would be the perfect replacement. The concealed idea was this “take this unleavened bread which replaces the Passover lamb.

It represents my body which will be broken for you. As the Passover was specifically said to be memorial ( Exodus 13.9) so also the unleavened bread was given as a memorial.

Here the concept of bread is becoming the literal body of Christ has no warrant in Scripture. Such thinking is like the corrupted fruit which comes from an attempt to interpret the new covenant and the New Testament in isolation from the Abrahamic Mosaic and Davidic covenants.

But the Lord had not ended his saying He took the red wine which was a traditional drink for the Passover then he took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to them saying, " Drink ye all of it " (Matthew 26:27) 4 cups of wine is part of the Passover observance and this importance can be found in Exodus.

God said I will bring you out from under the burdens of Egyptians and I will rid you out of their bondage and I will redeem you with stretched-out arms and with great judgment I will take you to me. For your people and I will be with you a God . (Exodus 6:6-7)

Here the four wills, I will bring you, out I will rid you, I will redeem you and I will take you are formed with rabbinic basis of Passover summary.

They are called in sequence , the cup of sanctification I will bring you out or separate you, the cup of praise I will rid you. the cup of redemption I'll redeem you and the cup of acceptance I'll take you.

It must be the fourth cup, the cup of acceptance that we come across in (Matthew's 26.27). Jesus himself did not drink of the fourth cup because it was the cup of acceptance and His nation did not accept Him at that time as the Messiah. But only at the end of the age when Israel recognize Him who He was and understood the new covenant, Jesus will drink the fourth cup.

There are four facts that came with the understanding of God's covenant. They are:

- 1) The law, covenant was a shadow of things to happen the new covenant is substance under the law covenant the payment for sin was anticipated under the new covenant it is realized.

Under the law covenant the sacrifices were provisional under the new covenant the sacrifices through Jesus death is eternal and totally sufficient. Under the law covenant man's lamb could only cover sin but a new covenant God's lamb could take away sin.

- 2) The new covenant totally and forever superseded the old covenant the Mosaic covenant. However the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants are understood and still in effect. In the new covenant no way superseded the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants they are still in full force. Some people are under the impression that Old Testament is only for Israel and has no direct implications for Biblical Christianity. This grievous error that has robbed the church of crucial truth and Biblical balance.

So to understand the New Testament correctly one must understand the Old Testament. Then only a faithful pastor can preach with passion both the New and Old Testaments. As we understand Jesus is the seed of Abraham who brings blessings to all men of faith is also the son of David in whom the covenant promise of throne and kingdom will be fulfilled forever.

Today we find some changes among the believers. They're not following the Sabbath day the journey of 3/4th mile. We do not bring animal to the Temple for sacrifice on the Passover.

They have no high priest to sacrifice a lamb or goat on our behalf on the day of atonement. We do not stone an adulterous woman as per the Mosaic law. The law was a conditional covenant. Israel themselves did not give the condition and Christ is the end of the law. Under these circumstances men are not in any obligation to observe the sabbath day as regulated by the Mosaic law.

But the new covenant has a better priesthood “ Melchizedec”. It has a better high priest {Jesus} and a better sacrifice the lamb of God. Finally it rests upon better promise {Hebrews 7.19}. In this context, apostle John spoke about the law. He praised the greatness of all messages with thirteen words only. If the son therefore shall make you free ye shall be free indeed. (John 8.36).

It is true that the church is the body of Christ. It is quite different from Israel’s nation. Then the promises given to the nation will be fulfilled by the remnant of Jews through the believing at the end of the age.

We must be reminded of one thing that is every blessing that the true churches experiencing finds its origin in Abrahamic covenant. So this information we can conclude by saying that all believers are the spiritual sons and daughters of Abraham and in nutshell spiritual Israelites.

As Abraham was accepted by God for his spotless faith, men also must place their faith in the word of God.

But it is a fact that New Testament believers do not stand in the place of the descendents of Abraham, Issac and Jacob. The church is not inherited the promises of blessings given to Israel nation for obedience, nor the church received any curse for its disobedience. “The church is the church and Israel is Israel”. There are two different entities but in the end two of them will be blessed by God.

The conclusion is that before we understand the covenants we must understand the whole history. The new covenant through faith in Christ alone is to experience life with God eternally. There is nothing better than this in the world.

## DIFFERENT BIBLICAL SACRIFICES

God offered His first sacrifice with Adam and Eve who attempted to cover their sin and shame with fig leaves in the garden of Eden.

Animal sacrifices were already in existence among heathens and many pagan cultures. But Israel's sacrificial system was not borrowed from heathen culture or idolatrous nor it was conceived in superstition darkened mind to appease the harsh forces of nature. Israel's sacrificial system was originated and received from the "one true God". And prophet Moses appeared to have recorded word by word as commanded by God. He laid his hand upon the head of his offering and killed it before the Tabernacle of the congregation ( Leviticus 3:8 ). Those sacrifices were supposed to have offered in the Holy Temple which the Lord called the house of sacrifice.

The sacrifices were considered to be most important in the temple worship. The technical details and the law regarding the sacrificial system was staggering over one hundred laws approximately and twenty percent of the laws of Moses related directly to the sacrifices. There are different type of offerings given as gifts to the Lord in the Temple. Apart from other things Israel gave the animal, silver half shekel first born animal and tithes from the harvest. According to history animal sacrifices began even before the existence of earthly temple of the Lord . In the beginning God offered the first sacrifice. God offered Adam and Eve who tried to cover the sin and shame with fig leaves; which was called agricultural product. Then God gave them animal skins in the place of fig leaves, for covering their sinful bodies. Before sin entered the world there was no death, hence no need of sacrifices.

The sons of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel also offered sacrifices. But Cain's sacrifice was of agricultural product like his parents choice of fig leaves which was rejected by God because it was not a sacrifice clubbed with blood. We can find in the Bible what kind of sacrifice God liked was done by Noah and

Abraham. They offered animal sacrifices only. The sovereign Almighty God doesn't need out side of Himself. He doesn't need the flesh and blood of animals. As a matter of fact, these sacrifices were divinely introduced for the benefit of man.

Sacrifices were offered by people for two reasons. Some sacrifices were made at the time of worship as an act of offering one's self or one's possessions to God. The second type of sacrifices were made for restoration as a substitute for safety and God's judgment. These sacrifices were a pleasant "aroma or sweet flavor to God. The sacrifices achieved several positive results. The first one was that it satisfied God's justice and it is God's righteousness that should judge the sin. The penalty for sin is death. The soul that is committed sin should die. Therefore, the sacrifices fulfilled the legal requirement in God's justice for judgment.

The second point is that the sacrifices provided substitute. God in His love and mercy allowed an innocent one to be exchanged for a stand in the way of guilty one called the worshipper. Since the innocent animals had no sin by nature, they were used as sacrificial substitutes for sinful man. That is in the case of worship the animal gave up its life to God.

The third point is that the sacrifices were atoned for sin. So, the Lord said, "for the life of flesh, in the blood and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your soul". The new testament reaffirmed and almost all things were by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no repression.

The fourth point is that the sacrifices enabled man to approach God. The Hebrew word for sacrifice is *Korban*. "Which means to draw near". Coming to the Biblical sacrifices when they were offered in faith and repentance they could restore the broken relationship between God and man. The sacrifices undoubtedly brought the worshipper near to God. It is said two kinds of items were offered on the Holy altar. Animals were sacrificed in the Temple. Some sacrifices fallowed agricultural products then a libation of vine and fine meal flour and it must be mixed with olive oil.



Basing on the notion of sacrifice the grain flour or raw flour was used and then baked into unleavened bread. For the purpose of Temple sacrifice sheep and goats were raised at a place called “MigdalEdar” which is in southern part of Jerusalem, and a few miles away out side Bethlehem. That plain area is also called Tower of the flock. The place become very famous for grazing even from the time of Jacob.

Prophet Micah also prophesied that Messiah would come out of Bethlehem. And you “o” daughter of Zion, unto thee shall come even the first dominion the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem (Micah 4:8 ). The Lord had provided provisions for the animal sacrifices. Which were supposed to be done in the Temple only.

At the time of Babylonian exile the Jewish people that lived and remained in the land continued their periodic sacrifices on the Temple Mount. Unfortunately at the time of exile the Temple was completely destroyed but the site was not desecrated. After some time some people like Zerubbabel came back to Jerusalem from exile and did something for the improvement of the Temple. Then the sacrifices continued only on the rebuilt altar and Temple foundations.

To-day there are no sacrifices on the Temple Mount because, that Temple Mount was desecrated by Islamic shrines. At the time of Temple sacrifices proper animals, cows, sheep, goats, turtles, young, pigeons etc. were used. The sacrifices were done without any blemish or faults in the animals so as to be perfect and valuable. That is it must be best of its kind. You shall not sacrifice to the Lord your God any bullock or sheep if there were blemish or any flaw because it would be an abomination to the Lord your God. Your sacrifices must be free from leaven and honey because leaven breed causes fermentation and decay and it is an indication of sin.

Therefore, it was strictly forbidden on the altar of the Lord. Honey is produced in the stomach of bees and in the digestion process it becomes sugar. Sacrifices had to be performed with salt, as it is used to preserve anything . Each

sacrifice was sprinkled with rock salt that is drawn from the dead sea . Sacrifices had to be done by means of slaughter (Leviticus 3:8) which might be called sacrifice with blood and the blood was the basis for physical animal life. The two words blood and life are interchangeable and in the Bible who sheds man's blood by man, shall his blood be shed for in the image of God made the man.

Shedding of blood and the death of animal were the indication of true sacrifice. The animal had to die because the penalty of sin is death and also the death of the sacrifice would atone sin. Sacrifices had to be offered immediately after the slaughter (Exodus 23:18). Then the blood had to be poured or sprinkled on the altar before it is coagulated (became thick and partly spoiled). The flesh had to be offered before it was spoiled. The sacrifice must be done properly, so that it would be a strong and perfect one. It mustn't be older than that and infirmed. Lambs , kid goats and calves of one year, rams and bulls of two years should be used for the sacrifice.

Sacrifices must be completely devoted to God Almighty only. It should not be parted or shared by any. It must not be for personal profit. It is clearly said that sheep shouldn't be sheared first and cattle mustn't be used first for work. Sacrifices had to be offered with pure and perfect heart. Sacrifices would be effective only when the worshipper has a repenting heart and strong belief in God and god's word is always clean in this matter. The Lord declared "The sacrifice of a wicked is an abomination to the Lord but the prayer of an upright person is his delight" (Proverbs 15:8 ).

The Lord wanted that whoever sacrifices without genuine faith and repentance commits the most abominable act. He that kills an ox is as if he slew a man. He that sacrifices a lamb is as if he cut off a dogs neck. He that offers an ablation is as if he offered the blood of a swine. He that burns an incense is as if he blessed an idol. It is highly impossible for anybody to please God without faith and repentance.

God wants us to behave justly to be merciful towards others and walk humbly with our God. The devotion of a person to God can be found in his

heart and then in his outward activities. The whole sacrificial system was called in the Hebrew language “Avodah”. Which means “service or work”. The sacrificial system was divided into different procedures for convenient.

The worshippers were asked to bring their sacrifices before the Lord (Leviticus 1:3-4 ). The worshippers would bring the sacrifice or some times they might purchase it at the temple. During the time of the mobile temple called the Tabernacle, the place for this ceremony was courtyard door of the Tabernacle near the sacrificial altar. But in the days of the temple the location was the court of Israelites section of the inner court. The worshippers would take their sacrifices to the priests for identification and then for the confirmation of what type of sacrifice they would like to have. The priests used to examine each and every animal whether it had all Biblical requirements. Then the priests checked each animal whether it was healthy without any blemish.

The Lord wanted that each worshipper should identify himself with his sacrifice. Then he must put his hand upon the burnt offering that means it was accepted by him to make atonement for the worshipper. At that time, the worshipper would face the west towards the Holy of Holies and then press his hands down upon the head of the animal to personally identify himself with it as his substitute. After everybody was satisfied a ceremony was conducted for all animal sacrifices except the birds and Passover animal the Lamb. Then the high priest would lay his hands upon the notional scapegoat during “Yon Kipper” ( Leviticus 16 : 21) ie (person of incompetence).

The worshipper had to press hands strongly between the two horns of the animal and then recite prayer. If the animal was for the purpose of peace offering, the worshipper must offer praising and if the animal was for the purpose of burnt offering sin or guilty of some thing the worshipper would be asked to confess his sin. For the scapegoat the high priest had to confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel and in all their transgression , in all their sins putting them upon the goat. Some guilt offerings were also needed to be waved before the Lord.

The animal was finally taken to the sacrificial place which was on the Northern side of the altar and then slaughtered. The Hebrew word for slaughter is “Shachat”. The sacrifice should not be stabbed or clubbed to death. A special long regular sharp enough razor was used. The priest had to slit the throat of the animal which was brought to the sacrifice for an immediate painless death in which the blood was spilled. The blood of the animal was collected in a silver vessel as it would be separated from the neck of the animal. At the bottom of the vessel, it became a point to prevent it from being set down. If not the blood might coagulate before it was applied to the altar and invalidate the sacrifices.

In the Bible we come across different types of offerings and sacrifices in the temple. The Lord created the burnt offering, meal and drink offering, peace offering, sin offering and guilt offering.

These Biblical sacrifices are described mostly in the “Book of Leviticus” the legal handbook for Israel’s priesthood. Let us have a glance at each of them.

1) The burnt offering and its purposes (Leviticus 6:8-13)

This burnt offering would be done in the Temple as an act of consecration and surrender to God. A burnt offering was required for a woman after child birth and a healed leper. In this burnt offering young bulls, lambs, kid goats, young pigeons are used. Among these offerings the most important was the Lamb which was offered for the nation on every Sabbath day both morning and evening.

2) The meal and drink offering (Leviticus 2:6, 14-23)

This is not technically a sacrifice. But it followed burnt offerings and peace offerings. It could be also offered as “Free will” offering. The most important of meal offering was the high priests’ daily offerings. It was twelve loaves of bread baked with olive oil.

3) Peace offering and its purpose (Leviticus 3:7, 11:21).

This would be done as a thanksgiving offering for God’s blessings. It was like a pledge for the answered prayer and free will worship praise.

4) Sin offering and its purpose.(Leviticus 6:2, 4:30).

This offering was atonement for unintentional Sin. If the sin is done intentionally, for that kind of people the punishment is death.

5) The guilt offering and its purpose (Leviticus 4:6, 7:40).

It is like sin offering and non capital offering only. Normally it is always personal offering for his guilty activities and never concern to the nation.

It is said the blood of the sacrifice must be handled by the priest only and the worshipper needed a mediator. They should not perform their own atonement but the priest alone carried the “Mizhak” bowl of blood to the altar. In the case of sin offering the blood was sprinkled on the upper horns of the altar. The remaining blood was then poured at the base of the altar. If the sin offering was for the priest of the nation, the blood was first sprinkled seven times inside the holy of holies. For the burnt, peace, and guilt offerings, the blood was sprinkled or thrown from the “Mizrak” on the four corners of the base of the altar.

The sacrifice was to be burnt in Holier part on the altar. If the sacrifice was for the offering the animal must be first skinned and the skin would be given to the attending priest before the fat, kidneys and liver parts were burnt on the altar. Then the animal had to be cut into pieces and sprinkled after the pieces were mixed with salt and placed on the fire. The internal organs were also washed properly and put on the fire.

If the sacrifice was with regard to the guilt or sin and concerned to the individual it would be eaten by the priests themselves in the inner court yard. And that is supposed to be prepared according to their desire. If the sacrifice was concerning to peace offering the attending priest would receive the breast and shoulders and the remaining parts of the meat was taken by the worshipper. After it was boiled they must eat it only inside the walls of Jerusalem.

Coming to the Passover sacrifice it was in practice among Israel after they left Egypt. But it also became part of the Samaritan Passover. It is really

surprising that there are only one thousand Samaritans remained in existence to day. They were the decedents of Israelites who remained in Northern part of the kingdom. The twelve tribes of Israel were separated as two parts during the reign of king Salomon for his sins. God could not tolerate the sins committed by the king Solomon . So he divided the nation as Northern kingdom of Israel with ten tribes and the southern kingdom of Judah with two tribes. These Israelites in course of time mixed and mingled with heathens and they almost forgot their origin and even forgot God who brought them from the bondage in Egypt.

The two tribes of the southern kingdom were the descendants of Judah and Benjamin. And their capital was Jerusalem. The Israelites were forced to remain in Northern kingdom, especially after the Assyrians conquest in 721 BC. Most of the Samaritans community lived in a village of Nablus. They did idol worship for 2300 years.

There were some similarities between Samaritan religion and Judaism. The Samaritan religion was based on the first five books of Moses, called Torah or Pentateuch. But they totally rejected the remaining Hebrew Scripture. They continued their sacrifices on the Mount Gerizim the worship center of the ancestors, Temple but not in the Temple of Jerusalem. Every year the Samaritans used to kill goats and eat a good number of lambs with unleavened bread. It was like Jews when they celebrate their Passover festival when the Temple was in existence.

There was a rift or confrontation between the Samaritans and the Jews, which takes us back to the days of Babylonian exile. The Samaritans forcibly resisted the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 4:1-9). This rift and misunderstanding continued and intensified during the reign of Alexander the great. The situation became more critical , when Joseph Manasseh brother of Jewish high priest John married the daughter of Sanbarat the leader of Samaritans (Antiquities 11.72) . Foreign marriages were strictly forbidden by God. So the elders of the priesthood planned to banish Manasseh from the society and Jerusalem, if he did not divorce his foreign wife. In such circumstances Manasseh's father-in-law got a wonderful plan.

Manasseh was made high priest to the Samaritans. In the mean time Sambarat got permission from the Alexander the great and constructed a Samaritan temple on the mount Gerizim which was patronized after Jerusalem.

Then what is said about the sacrificial Lamb of God?. Different types of sacrifices mentioned in the Bible might appear to an atheist or to a secular person as barbaric or unscrupulous. In the same way for a modern man it is quite different. It was concern to a sinful man and sovereign God and reconciliation to God through death a sacrificial substitute. But for those people who are spiritually blind the above said examples are sheer madness in their view.

This is clearly seen in the Passover when the fresh form of legal action was launched against orthodox Jews in Jerusalem. With same advice the Jews might be prevented from demonstrating about the sacrificial technique on a single lamb before the meat was donated. It is not at all important because hundreds of thousands of cattle and sheep are butchered every day by the people in the world. Even for the dedication of Jerusalem temple at the time of king Solomon 22000 oxen and 120000 sheep were killed at that time. But all these sacrifices were not intended nor comfortable and not even pleasant to our minds. God is always merciful, but he can never pardon sin.

Now coming to the main topic regarding the sacrifice of the lamb, understanding of the Biblical sacrifices is more important. According to the book of Hebrews, the sacrifices in the Bible have some link with our spiritual life. Those sacrifices gave us a wonderful insight into the Messiah's sacrificial work on our behalf. The result of His sacrifice on the cross the sin of man was taken away by Himself. That is to say the Messiah scarified His life for our sins.

The Messiah became our substitute. He was miserably wounded on the cross for our iniquities and the chastisement of our peace was upon Him. And we are healed of our sins with the strips He received from the people who crucified Him and the Lord that laid on Him the iniquities of all of us. Our sins were put on Him and He bore them in His own body on the tree and He was a ransom to many of us.

The sacrificial death of the Messiah was absolutely necessary because through this only He could fulfill the Biblical prophecy. Prophet Isaiah in his prophecy said that the Messiah would be an offering for our sins. He willingly submitted Himself to His Mission like a Lamb which would never resist the shearers. Among many Hebrew prophecies, Daniel foretold “And shall Messiah be cut off but not for Himself”. Another example “And so the Messiah gave Himself for us as an offering and sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:2).

The sacrificial death of the Messiah had become cruel necessary because it was to deal with the sin of man. He stood in our place by means of His death and received our judgment which satisfied God’s anger. The wonderful result of His death was that, it took away our sin, redeemed us, relieved us, justified us made us righteous, healed us, gave us new life made us a new creation, brought to us everlasting peace, made us children of God; forgave us, cleansed us, brought us into a new covenant and finally reconciled us with God.

The sacrificial death of the Messiah was a basis for His future exaltation . All the creation one day must fall down and worship Him as the sacrificial Lamb of God. The Lamb that was slain was worthy to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessings forever. Animal sacrifices were limited. They were certainly good and wonderful gift of God. In spite of all that they were temporary until the Messiah provided one’s and for all permanent sacrifice to take away our sin. The animal sacrifices were atoned for sin but they could never take away man’s sin.

After Jesus had accepted sacrificial death, He sat down and then entered the Holy of Holies in Heavenly Temple, once through His own blood but not the animal. His sacrifice was completed, and never to be repeated. He paid completely for the sins of all, those who trusted Him, He died in our place and now as a high priest representative He sits before the Father night and day. Jesus came in flesh and blood as the Lamb of God. He became one of us and then sacrificed Himself. We human beings always in need of God who also provided Christ as our savior.



## THE HOLY GARMENTS



The priestly garments were “Divinely designed” which bore the fingerprints of God. Therefore these priestly garments were treated as Holy. They were supposed to be worn only at the time of priestly service, but never on any other occasion. The dress had a particular patron, which was not according to the taste of individual priest. Those garments were used by the priest for the glory of God, and to give good impression whoever saw them. The Hebrew word for glory is (Kavod). The dress was also for beauty and splendor also.

The garments were not intended to draw the attention of the public nor for the priest to be attractive but only to glorify and sanctify the Almighty God before the people whom the priest was ministering. The beauty and glory of the garments were achieved and prepared from costly material. The quality was quite conspicuous with their brilliant colours and textures. All details of the garments were memorial of God’s redemption work of Israel.

The priestly garments need certain method of making to distinguish themselves from the public. There are some Biblical passages especially from the Book of Exodus which described the making and consecration of the dress. The foot wear of the priest was not part of their garments, when they were on their duty or doing their ministry.

The Holy Temple was the “Home” of God as the “burning bush on the Mount Senai”. It was the place of God’s presence. Both Moses, and Joshua remained bare footed, when they stood before God Shekinah glory. The concerned priests were asked to purify themselves every day before they wear this priestly garments. So, before every holy occasion they immersed themselves in a pool or rain or water of spring. As it is said the garments were holy, the Lord commanded “therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, so put them on”. If the priest had done his duty unclean, it would be capital offence, because it was nullified and probably he would lose the job.

Among the twelve tribes of Israel (Jacob) God selected the descendants of Levite as priests for the temple in Jerusalem. Accordingly the descendants of Aaron had become permanent priests of the temple, and were asked to maintain the garments properly.

There were four items included in their uniform. They were linen tunic, Head dress, belt and breeches. The high priest must be from the family of Aaron only. The garments of the high priest were decorated with other additional items. They were ephod, breast plate, robe and gold head band plate. The priests colourful garments were sometimes called “Golden garments”, because a fine gold was used on the dresses while making them. All these formalities were observed strictly as long as Jerusalem Temple was in full functioning.

The uniform of the high priests, used on the occasion of atonement was also called the uniform of “Yom Kippur”. It had another four additional items. This uniform was of linen which should be the same like the regular priests except without colour or embroidery on the linen. These garments were made of pure white linen called “Holy Garments”. This particular uniform was worn

by the high priest on the “Yom Kippur” for the atonement of the “sins” of the nation and after that occasion, the same dress never be used.

The priests were asked to keep their garments in proper condition always. But according to rabbinic opinion worn out high priests dresses would be stored instead of recycled. Marred garments would invalidate the ministry of the high priest, yet during the time of Roman, rule the Jewish authorities were denied to control the uniform in the second temple. Therefore the qualitative and costly garments were kept locked secretly in the “Anionic Fortress” on the North west corner of the Temple Mount and the high priest was required permission from the Roman authorities to wear that uniform. (Antiquities 15.114).

Israel’s priesthood was a matter of family dynasty. And for this purpose, God Almighty had designated only Aaron’s family for the Temple priesthood and they were permitted to use colourful garments. The clothing of high priest was planned to be unique in its kind and set aside for God only. The God referred to nine times in the book of Exodus regarding the uniform of Aaron. So, God commanded Moses by saying “And thou shalt make the holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty”.

In the days of existence of Jerusalem Temple only the high priest was allowed to wear that colourful and beautiful dress which was called “Holy items. They were with a breast plate an ephod, a robe, embroidered coat, a meter and a girdle. In addition to that the high priest wore a gold head band plate and linen breaches under his garments on his body. The dress of the high priest was fabricated and used gold, blue, purple scarlet and the white linen. The garments were made undoubtedly from the costly material.

The blue, purple and scarlet wool yarns were dyed with very costly dyes gold thread was made from the sheets of thin and pure gold. Then it would be cut in the form of wire. The ephod was used as a waist band or girdle. This ephod was woven with five types of materials like gold ,linen ,blue, purple and scarlet. The high priest in these garments was a constant reminder of the tribe to God, that he represented. As described in the scripture, he bore his name before the Lord, upon his two shoulders for a memorial.

The second item of the high priest in his garment was the breast plate. The fabric of it was woven from the same colourful material used for the ephod. Then the twelve gem stones set in gold were attached to the face of the breast plate. The items were arranged in four rows of three in each line and each stone was unique in its appearance. Each gem was engraved with a different tribe of Israel. The stones of the breast plate signified Israel and remained as remembrance. It was a perpetual memorial before the Lord. The twelve gem stones collectively represented Israel and their precious position in God forever.

The breast plate was worn by the high priest permanently as a reminder of native representative before God. As God said He bore the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continuously. So the breast plate was called the breast of the judgment because it was used in making critical decisions like going to war etc. The breast plate also contained “Urim and Thummim” in its pockets. But it was not known how they were operated to communicate God’s answer. These two words “Urim and Thummim” were derived from Hebrew roots for “lights and perfections”. It was only priests that could interpret God’s answer that came through Urim and Themmim (Ezra 2.63).

God commanded Joshua to stand before the high priest “Eleazar” and to use Urim and Thummim to enquire about the timings of the Lord for directing the war. Whenever Israel had to go to war during the time of Judges they consulted the Lord. King David also consulted God by using Urim and Themmim through the high priest. But God rejected the answer to King Saul because of his “sins”, when he also enquired God with the help of Urim an Themmim. But these were lost at the time of Babylonian captivity in 586 BC. This theft took place during the time of the destruction of Jerusalem Temple and they were never seen again.

This brief information indicates that the entire breast plate must have been lost forever. But according to historical information another breast plate was consecrated as a substitute without ‘Urim and Thummim” for the second temple. The correct identification of the breast plate with gem stones was not at all clear so far. There is no historical evidence even about it.

Josephus was a high priest and an eye-witness for the breast plate and its gem-stones. And he also gave a clear cut description of the breast plate and the gem-stone here. As he said there were twelve stones on the breast plate. Which were extraordinary in largeness and beauty. People can not buy them because of their immense value. Those gem-stones were inserted in the breast plate, in such a way that they would not fall down from it at any cost. And following are the names of those twelve gem-stones.

Name of the stones	-	Their colour
1. Ruby	-	Red
2. Jade	-	Green
3. Agate	-	Red, White, Blue, Striped
4. Carbunch	-	Bluish
5. Lapis Lazuli	-	Blue
6. Quartz	-	Clear
7. Turquoise	-	Blue
8. Amethyst	-	Purple
9. Agate	-	Gray
10. Aquamarene	-	Blue – green
11. Onyx	-	Black
12. Opal	-	Multi- coloured.

The names of these gem-stones were in Hebrew language, because the breast plate was made by the Temple authorities and they inserted the gem-stones from right to left like the Hebrew scripture. As there were twelve gem-stones, the names of twelve tribes were inscribed on them. This is also not mentioned in the Bible. But the high priest Josephus said “Now the names of all

these sons of Jacob were engraved on those stones, whom we esteem as the head of all tribes and had the honour of a name according to the order of birth.

Another opinion was that in the “Targum Yeruslmi” stated that the tribal names were arranged in the order of matriarch. And finally the Temple institute accepted both the opinions for the construction of modern breast plate and arrange stones in it in matriarch birth order.

There is no authentic information also about Urim and Thummim. They were not dice or lots but the mystical names of God written on a parchment. Scripture also did not clearly mention the operation of Urim and Themmim. But rabbinic commentary referred that the Lord replied enquiries by causing various engraved letters of the tribal names on the gem- stones to shine and spell the answer. This might be based on the information of Josephus that the Lord caused the breast plate gem- stones to radiate with great splendor to give an impression that He would give victory to Israel in the battle.

The robe of high priest was pure blue colour and without sleeves. It was woven without sleeves from head to foot and not stretched. But a decorated bending was woven around the neck of high priest to protect it from ripping. The golden bells were used to prevent the high priest from dying while he was ministering in the holy place. It was the place of Menorah incense altar and show bread table. In those days there was wide spread rumour that the purpose of those bells was to sound the movements of the high priest in the “Holy of Holies’ to verify whether he was killed in the judgment.

If we think about it seriously it appears not at all true and believable. It was only a myth. At the same time this incident is not at all found in the scripture. The high priest had only the linen white garments. Whenever he went into the Holy of Holies but never he was with golden garments.

According to rabbinic commentary, seventy two pomegranate bells and seventy two golden bells were set in the robe around the hem of high priest. The 144 bells were another memorial in the garments about the twelve tribes of

Israel. Pomegranates were used in the garments just for glory and beauty, because pomegranates were considered to be the most beautiful of their “seven species”. These seven species were Biblical and agricultural product of Israel.

Their land was called “the land of wheat and barley” and vines, fig trees, pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey. The pomegranate trees would get beautiful red flowers and bright red fruits. Those fruits were considered to be very costly to purchase. They have no doubt delicious taste and that fruit has tremendous health benefits.

The “Tzitz” was a solid gold plate engraved with the words “HOLINESS TO THE Lord”. These words were arranged on the plate in a raised manner but not stamped. This Tzitz was attached to the hood of high priest with a blue cord that wrapped over his head dress till forehead and it was two fingers high in size and spanned the fore head temples. As a matter of fact no body had any authentic information about the whereabouts of these priestly garments. But rabbi Eleazar said he had seen the plundered Tzitz in Rome during the reign of Hadrian.

The holiness of God was converged in the high priest on the Mount Sinai. At the same time, Israel was set apart as a ‘holy nation’ from other nations. The Levi was set apart from other eleven tribes to be a holy tribe. And the sons of Aaron were set apart from the tribe of Levi to be “holy priests”. The high priest was set apart from the family to be a single priest who could enter the “Holy of Holies to represent Israel. The gold plate of his forehead proclaimed him holy to the Lord”.

The white linen clothing became common to all priests irrespective of their cadre in course of time in the temple. The tunic was made for the priest with fine linen. It is said the beauty of the dress was found in its whiteness and pure fabric came from side- ply linen thread. Its beauty was also due to the uniqueness, intricate and wonderful texture of weaving. And though the fabric was not smooth, it could be woven with a raised embroidery pattern. The body of tunic was woven as a single piece instead of stitching together. It was long sleeved and could cover the body of priest from top to bottom.

This tunic was recently reintroduced by the temple authorities in Jerusalem and now it became hand made on a loam.

The head dress of a high priest was larger than the ordinary priest. The head dress of a common priest was like a turban. Very small in appearance. Regarding this Josephus pointed out, and described that the regular head dress was like a cap. A linen belt or sash was wrapped many times above the waist of tunic. According to the “Talmud”(ancient rabbinic writings on Jewish law and traditions) the sash belt for high priest was embroidered with blue, purple and scarlet. The Yom Kippur belt of the high priest was only pure white linen.

Josephus described sash as a four fingers broad , but so loosely woven and one might think it was like the skin of a serpent. It was embroidered with the flowers of blue, purple, scarlet and then fine twined linen. Josephus also pointed out, the sash of a common priest was like purple girdle. In the heavenly temple, the high priest was the Messiah Himself and the angel that attend Him will be the golden sash instead of linen in Jerusalem Temple. The garments were critical components of priestly ministry. So, they used their head dress at the time of atonement and consecration. Linen shorts and breeches were used as under garments. The priests were asked to be careful and protect themselves from immorality, because it was prohibited against the steps on the temple altar.

Immorality was intolerable in the priesthood. At the same time this social immorality was very common among the pagan worshippers and it was strictly prohibited in the worship of Holy God. So the garments were also holy as they used them for temple worship. Transgression of Temple law, invalidated any work done by unlawful priest and such priests deserved capital punishment from the temple authorities. The laws of priesthood were strictly observed because the priests were representatives of the nation to God.

Prophet Zechariah got a vision regarding the priest and his garments. This was a visual prophesy of Jewish nation which was represented by the high priest. Zechariah who was a prophet cum priest became more familiar with the high priest and ministered along with him. And that high priest was Joshua Ben



Jelozadak. He was born in Babylon. He was brought up and grew beyond the great river as part of Jewish exile. Zechariah saw in his vision the high priest Joshua standing in dirty garments instead of pure white. His dress was very badly defiled. Zechariah was horrified and repulsed by the intorable scene. He was unbelievably afraid of his vision.

Joshua was the grand son of Seraiah the last high priest of king Solomon's Temple. Joshua had ministered during the disastrous reign of Jedikiah Judah's last king. But he became very proud of himself. The divine commentary briefly estimated his character and concluded that he did evil in the sight of the Lord. He refused Jeremiah's council which came from the Lord and arrogantly rebelled. The result was the king of Babylon crushed him. Added to that the kingdom of Judah was destroyed and the temple of the Lord razed.

Seraiah the high priest was brought before king Nebuchadnezzar and finally he was also executed along with some others. Joshua was a nephew of EZRA a prominent priest and scribe of the Babylonian Jewish community which was in exile. This same EZRA brought a good number of Jews later from Babylon to their home land. Joshua already lived in Jerusalem for about eighteen years and he also returned from the exile along with him for rebuilding of temple called the second Temple.

In the beginning everything went on well and in seven months they rebuilt the courts of the temple. The sacrifices continued on the rebuilt stone altar. Then in one year they rebuilt the foundations of the holy temple. But suddenly something went wrong and the construction work was stopped because of some opposition from a group of Samaritans.

In spite of all such disturbances in the autumn of 520 BC God spoke through prophets Zechariah and Haggai. God asked them not to delay the construction work of the Temple. In the vision Zechariah saw Joshua was standing and he could not stop gazing at him. He understood, what was lacking in the priest Joshua, who entered the temple alone to atone for "sins" of the nation. His holy garments were defiled, vile and filthy. His head dress tunic, and the

linen, belt all were polluted and looked shabby thereby he discredited himself to the position of a high priest.

If a high priest was unclean before the Lord the only punishment according to the law of Moses was death. Zechariah was shocked to see the pathetic condition of Joshua the high priest. He was mentally disturbed about his nation and people. As prophet Isaiah said “But we are all as an unclean thing and all our righteousness is as filthy rages” (Isaiah 64.6). Zechariah’s vision continued further and became worse. Then on the right of Joshua Satan came and stood, who was no other than cherub. Zechariah felt heaviness on his chest as he was badly disturbed mentally and then momentary difficulty in his breathing and chill swept over his soul. Then a verbal attack was in progress. Satan condemned Joshua before the Lord with his venomous speech. He pointed out the defiled and sinful condition of Joshua and unworthy nation that Joshua represented as high priest before God. On the basis of God’s burning righteousness and justice, Satan requested the Lord to strike down the high priest for degrading the image of the Temple and its law and finally his sinful people.

But a tremendous rebuke from the Lord silenced the accuser Satan. The people of Israel might be sinful and unworthy of God’s love and mercy. Yet God would not desert them because they were His chosen people. His promise to them would not be revoked. So, God would turn the nation back to Himself and rescue them from any kind of danger. And God finally commanded the angels to cleanse Joshua and put on clean garments. Then the Lord spoke to purify Joshua “see I have taken away your inequity”. Joshua’s head dress was unique and spotless. The matching white sash was wrapped around his chest. His white linen tunic was pristine and snow white as he stood in the presence of the Lord.

In this context Jesus symbolized Israel’s future cleansing. On that day, the Lord would raise up His Messiah, who was called the “Branch” and the “stone” (Daniel 2.34 – 35). Through His Messiah the Lord would bring the national redemption of Israel. With this the remaining people of Israel would be also saved. And one day God would remove the inequity in that land. Then

regarding the promises concerned to Israel would become direct and clear. God's plan would not be thwarted and the nation never replaced. God would sovereignly draw history to a divinity designed conclusion.

Israel's remnant would repent and return. Even the remnants of Jacob would return into the fold of mighty God. The remnant of Israel must have to trust in the pierced Messiah. Israel's remnants would be spiritually born again in a day. After all these changes, spiritual rebirth would take place and the Messiah has to come to raise up the tribes of Israel. Finally the remnants of Israel would enter the Messianic kingdom in peace and harmony. In that kingdom people might sit under His vines and fig trees.

The Messianic glory, beauty of the redeemed Israel and the Lord of patriarch Jacob would tremendously impress men. The eternal priesthood and the rule of Messiah, the king priest, the Lord would be for a crown of Glory and for a diadem of beauty. The priesthood of Israel had certain limitations. The posts of priesthood were only temporary. So they finally grew old and died. If the priests were imperfect they would perform sacrifices for their sins. But the animals and their blood would not take away the sins of people.

Messianic priesthood was far superior and unlimited. This Messiah would remain as the permanent high priest. He is perfect in every thing and so no need of cleansing. His sacrifice on the cross was enough for the atonement of our sins and that would not be repeated. He sat at the exalted right hand of God, since His sacrificial work was completed. With that sacrifice Jesus was able to save all those people forever who trusted Him. The promise of cleansing eternal life and a place in Messianic kingdom are not only for a future remnant but also they are for us today.

## SEVEN JEWISH HOLIDAYS – PART I

Many Christians are unfamiliar with the nature and number of holidays God allotted to Jewish people. God provided them seven holidays. They are also called seven feasts of God. Some readers may find more interest in acquiring this kind of information. These seven feasts of Lord also called the Lord's appointments. Lets us try to understand the prophetic value of these critical days and their basic importance lying behind them. These feasts were systematically celebrated by the Jewish people in those days. It is strange to think about them how they ran with perfect provision to chronology or prophetic events appointed by God to bring about His redemption plan to the world. Among these seven feasts the first four would come during the spring season. The epic events of God redemption work but no human kind is depicted. These four feasts occur during the first coming of Jesus Christ. The feast of the Lord will provide us with a clear and compelling view of God's prophetic time line from Calvary to the kingdom.

We may get some encouragement to spend a few hours to explore the topic in a proper way. This prophetic provision was written in two parts as two articles. There are about 206 countries in the world and each country has its own importance politically and religiously. Generally, every country has its own holidays over the death of some topmost political leaders or some holidays in connection with the historical background of that country. There might be various reasons for the holidays of a particular country. But our eternal God provided to his chosen people just seven holidays specially established holidays. They might have some other holidays apart from them but these feasts are completely concerned to God because they are instituted by God himself. And those holidays are chronologically discussed in the book of Leviticus 23<sup>rd</sup> chapter of the Old Testament and also in the New Testament. These feasts are introduced by God for Himself and to be observed for Himself. Those holidays have nothing to do with the other holidays enjoyed by the Jews. Therefore these feasts are called

literally the feasts of God. This word “Feast” is Hebrew word which means the “Appointed time.” These seven feasts can prophetically tell the story of redemption plan and the feasts are also called “Holy communications” because they are intended for the meeting of God and men for the holy purpose. As per the Biblical history the seven feasts have appointed timings and God only designed them for holy purposes. Those significant feasts carry with them some soundness and unparalleled importance. God gave these seven prominent feasts to Hebrew nation only because they were His chosen covenant people. The seven feasts are given by God systematically setup to spring season and for agricultural timings. In such conditions Israel became an agricultural nation completely dependant upon the previsions it would get out of agricultural cultivation.

The timings of these seven feasts were based on the Jewish “Lunar” (Jewish calendar which has only 354 days) of the year. Our calendar is called solar year calendar with 365 days. It is very strange to know that for every 19 years they will have seven years with 13 months regularly. If this is not true then winter months in Jewish calendar would occur in summer after a few years and summer months in winter. So these holidays would not follow on the same day on the “Gregorian calendar” (the calendar commonly used today) that we are using every year. The seven holidays fundamentally typify timings and importance of the events of our Lord’s redemptive carrier. As said in the scripture the first feast commences with the “Passover” festival and at that critical movement he was crucified for the sins of the entire humanity. The next important feast according to chronological order is the seventh feast called the feast of “Tabernacle.” Jesus would return to establish His thousand year Messianic kingdom (Revelation 20:4). In this context, no truth can be manipulated to make the appointed feasts to confirm major events in the life of Jesus Christ. They are all clearly specified in the scripture. The scriptural realities which the feasts openly pointed out or exactly fulfilled in Jesus. Then all men and everywhere people are kept in order. The entire humanity has been invited to approach God according to His times through Christ. All men will be put in to a reconciled position. Hence, the divine invitation – “come unto me all that ye labor and are having laden and I will give you rest” (Mathew 11:25).

If we turn down the unprecedented and glorious invitation under any circumstances to meet the sovereign authority who is universal at the appointed timings and if we do not accept the invitation with our humility and wisdom it is nothing but our foolishness and pride. If we are sane we must accept the invitation whole heartedly because it came from our eternal father God Almighty. The blessings of gentiles and their participation was clubbed with the feasts and is no surprised to Israel. It is constant with Gods unconventional covenant to the patriarch Abraham the principal provision of which is “in thy seed shall all the nations of the world” (earth) be blessed (Genesis 22:18). The Messiah also said the same in (John 4:22) that “Salvation is of the Jews.” Israel and other church are distinct entities with distinct promises. Every blessing that the church has been enjoying was the outcome of Abrahamic, Davidic, and the new covenant that God made with Israel at suitable times. There is an unforeseen and contagious relationship between the old and New Testament also between Israel and the church. Nobody should think seriously that the gentiles cannot have the blessings which are accomplished through the messiah in connection with seven feasts God planned with Israel. The Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament and the New Testament was concealed in the Old Testament.

There is no other theme loftier than the seven feasts of the God as they described the complete redemption carrier of the messianic moving from Calvary to His kingdom. According to Biblical history the number seven has its own importance in the Bible primarily in the book of Revelation. Some scholars after reading this book Revelation also called this “The book of seven” and the “Fifth gospel” because this number is mentioned more than 50 times in the book of revelation. These Biblical numbers indicate perfection and completion of God after creating everything and took rest on the seventh day that does not mean God is tired of His creation after six days. He never got tired of His creation because He is omnipotent and He wanted to take rest as He completed His work. He wished to take rest for His satisfaction.

**IMPORTANCE OF NUMBER SEVEN:**

On the seventh day of the week the children of Israel would observe the Sabbath day of rest. Until fourth century A.D. all the people of the world observed Saturday as the Sabbath day. But in 325 A.D. a Byzantine roman emperor named “Constantine” embraced Christianity with his mother “Heliona” and changed that Saturday Sabbath to Sunday Sabbath day. As a matter of fact, emperor Constantine did many things for the spreading of Christianity. He built a good number of churches and the most important thing he did was abolition of cross punishment. He extended wonderful support to all churches in Jerusalem and other places both Jews and Christians were in complete rest during his reign. The seventh month of the Jewish calendar year as mentioned in the scripture is “Holy.” During that month three feasts out of seven will be observed. Every seventh year the nation is asked to stop the cultivation of land so that the ground would be also in rest. According to the law of Moses seven seasons of years are counted as ( $7 \times 7 = 49$  years) and the next one year will be taken from the Bible as a gift. With that clubbing the number becomes 50 and they called it “Jubilee year.” This jubilee year is welcomed to some people because whoever had debts would be forgotten and the slaves also set free.

The period of 77 years would determine the Jewish people and during that time God has to bring perfection completion and of his redemption prophesy to Israel. This text is the backbone for understanding prophesy. This book of revelation records the consummation of this age and in that book the number seven is used for more than 50 times. The entire book revolves around the seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls (vials)etc. The seven feasts are explained in the God appointed times. God wanted to make use of that time to meet His people for the holy purposes. The completion of seven holidays would bring a triumphant end and them a glorious messianic kingdom follows. During that age everyman will sit under his own fig tree. The idea here is not intended to suggest boredom or that of activity but of completion and satisfaction. And on that auspicious day all good things that the hearts desire would be fulfilled. The righteousness justice and holiness become a reality on the earth work. As

discussed above, four out of seven feasts occur in the spring season (March – April). The fulfillment of four feasts are holidays will be done properly according to the work of Almighty God.

The four feasts and events that occur in them during spring season and Lord typifying in the Hebrew scripture have been fulfilled in the messiah in connection with his first coming. It is crystal clear that the first four feasts had been accomplished during the first coming of Jesus Christ 2000 years ago. As far as Biblical reference is concerned people of Old Testament had enjoyed themselves what those four festivals and the blessings had been continued still among them. Then the final three priests will occur in the fall of the year in a brief period of time in the Hebrew month “Tishri” (which occurs in mid September – October). These final three feasts appointed timings are still in future in terms of literal fulfillment. Their Biblical faith must have been continued with renewed blessings even today. The final three feasts will directly lead to the second coming of Christ said in the book of Titus “The blessed hope of the church is the second coming of the Christ.” The first four feasts are explained briefly in 19 verses only in the book of Leviticus (Leviticus 23:4-22).

### **FIRST FEAST PASSOVER:**

The first feast is “Passover.” These are the holy convocation (feasts of the Lord) which ye shall proclaim in their seasons. It is founded with the day of first month as the day of Passover of the Lord. It has been explained with full details. It being the Lord’s first feast also called the foundational without which the other six feasts that follow are meaningless and there shall be no personal redemption. This Passover feast will come in the spring season of the year on 14 day for the Hebrew month called “Nisan” which arrives in (March- April) and it is said in the Bible as the beginning of the year (Exodus 12:2).

The Jewish people had been enjoying and celebrating this feast annually since the time of Moses in reality. But it was the only Passover feast that took place in Egypt about 3500 years ago. This Passover took place when the Israelites were about to leave Egypt once and for all for good to their promised land



called Canaan. God wanted to liberate them from their slavery in Egypt. In that Passover in Egypt a lamb was sacrificed and blood applied to each door posts and lintels. This was done completely in faith and obedience. This they did simply because they heard the name of God and his word for the first time after 430 years of their stay in heathen country but these people became stiff necked and hard hearted in the wilderness wonderings. Before they left Egypt the result of their first sacrifice of the lamb was that the first born was saved from death. It remained as a memorial for centuries. Some renowned scholars expressed their opinions that it was the only Passover.

To say in brief there was only one occasion when the messiah's flesh was pierced and His blood spilled on the cross of Calvary for the sake of sinners on the earth. Therefore the Lord supper is an ongoing memorial of that one for all sacrifices for sin. The events that led to the Passover are among the most dramatic in the entire scripture and Biblical history. The children of Israel enslaved under Pharaoh who was a hard task master. By that ill treatment the status of Hebrews had been shattered and degraded. As a result they finally cried unto God. This memorable event prompted God to make use of the services of Moses to liberate Israel the God chosen people from the bondage of Pharaoh as He used the services of Samson to liberate Israel from the ill treatment of philistines and he used the services of Gideon to liberate Israel from the penalization of midianits later. God talked with Moses first time at the burning bush and then planned everything.

It was a desert area without any day to day requirements of the people. Another note worthy point is that the bush was burning but not consuming. So Moses while feeding his sheep became curious and went to see that mysterious thing. Then from the bush God spoke with Moses, which surprised him and this burning bush story remained in the sweet memory of Israel for centuries. They would remember that hot flames of satanic fury other manifested in the form of vehement and Semitism. The burning bush would burn but not to consume as God spoke to Moses from its midst. But it was assumed God was speaking to the world. When holy men penned God's word they were filled with the spirit of

God and wrote. They were no other than Jewish people namely Moses, Isaiah, St. John, Peter, Paul, etc. when a woman gave birth to the Messiah it was no other than a Jewish woman (Miriam) (Mary) if it is analyzed God told Moses that He had heard the cry of His people who were in bondage. God wanted to free them as they needed His help. Till that moment those Hebrews were unrecognized and uneducated slaves.

They did not know actually who they were or what their nationality was or what happened at the burning bush or who their God was and His name. When Joseph was in a very high position under pharaoh a famine came and caused all the sons of Jacob to come and settle in Egypt. Since then they remained in that place for more than 400 years as slaves. They mixed and mingled with the heathens and began to worship their heathen Gods and Goddesses. They totally forgot about the God of their ancestors like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and turned to worship Egypt Gods and Goddesses who were about 80 in number. So these Hebrews knew only man made Gods but not the God Almighty of their fore fathers. They did not know ancestral patriarch Abraham who had a promise from the same God the land of Milk and Honey called Canaan for them to occupy in future as the descendants of Abraham and their nations shall be abundantly blessed like stars in heaven and sand in the sea.

Our merciful God is undoubtedly a covenant keeping God. These Hebrews did not know this God but He knew them and He wanted to save them. His chosen people with the help of Moses. He knew their affliction and cry and time had come for the Hebrews to pack up everything and get ready to leave that country forever with their kith and kin. And God said to Moses “I have surely seen the affliction of my people.” Cecil B. D Mille in his classic epic “The Ten Commandments” while using the best cinematography and special effects of his day did not overstate the reality of Exodus from Egypt nor the men today with all their technology could retake the miraculous nature of Exodus while he was producing that monumental movie. God was with him and worked with him. God intentionally hardened the heart of the pharaoh so that he would not allow the children of Israel to go. Then God sent 10 plagues one after another and the

last plague was concerning the death of first born in every family. The Israelites could save their first born by applying blood of the lamb to their main door posts which the Egyptians could not do even pharaoh lost his only son in the tenth plague which surprised his followers. This incident made pharaoh to admit the God of Israel as the real God and finally the Israelites left Egypt permanently.

After pharaoh gave the permission Moses led the Israelites and it is said more than one and half million slaves with all their bag and baggage marched forward crossed the Sphinx of Egypt and entered into the desert. It was a remarkable seen to witness one and half million slaves were emancipated from their bondage. Generally all the cities in ancient days used to have walls around them but this Egypt had no such protection. The children of Israel marched towards the inhospitable wilderness. They were simply marching but did not know how or where they would get their food and water. Their destination was the promised land Canaan. They crossed the red sea where in the depth of the water was about 10 feet. Then they stayed at the mount Senai for sometime to receive the 10 commandments and to prepare the tabernacle the first mobile temple of God. They became hard nuts to crack and grumbled for everything in that desert. So God made them to wander in that wilderness as a punishment for forty years and finally reached their promised land under the leadership of Joshua.

Much must have been said about Israelites regarding their way of life in Egypt 3500 years ago but basing on the cry for their helpless condition we can use one word only “Redemption” as they suffered a lot innocently. The events that took place at that time were real, the miracles done by Moses were real and everything was done by God. Many things were done by God in favor of Hebrews and unquestionably our Almighty God is far superior to 80 Gods and Goddesses of Egyptians. The merciful God redeemed Israel with the hope they would worship Him as their true and living God but their redemption was not an ordinary one. It was so costly that the blood of Messiah had to shed the true lamb of God which took away all sins of the world. Apostle Paul while writing to 1 Corinthians said “Christ on a Passover is sacrificed for us low in the grave he lay.”

### **SECOND FEAST UNLEAVENED BREAD:**

The second feast is called the feast of unleavened bread. It was set on the fifteenth day of the same month Nisan fourteenth being Passover. This feast would continue for seven days during that week on the first day night and seventh night meeting would take place between God and His people. This is also called convocation. So both Passover and the unleavened bread would be observed by Jews as one holiday. This is strictly observed by them wherever they are throughout the world. “And on fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord seven days ye must eat unleavened bread” (Leviticus 23:6). In the Bible leaven symbolizes “Error or evil” as it causes fermentation therefore, the Lord said to His disciples “Beware of the leaven (evil doctrine) of the Pharisees. The Messiah was crucified on Passover. It was done by the Roman authorities and no way blocked the feast of Jews. Then He was buried according to Jewish custom in a borrowed tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea. His body would not decay in the grave or decompose like the bodies of other human beings. As it is said we come from dust and we go again into the dust will not apply to Jesus Christ. If the Passover feast or festival speaks about the death of our Lord on Calvary and if it is true then the feast of unleavened bread proclaimed that his physical body would not experience the ravages of death when His body was in the grave.

### **THIRD FEAST FIRST FRUIT**

“And the Lord spoke unto Moses saying speak unto the children of Israel and unto them when you become unto the Lord which I gave unto you and reap the harvest there of then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest unto the priest. And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord to be accepted for you on the morrow after the Sabbath” (Leviticus 23:9-11).

The third feast occurs on the second day of the seven day feast of unleavened bread. It is called the feast of “First fruits” so according to Jewish calendar their first month is “Nisan” as our first month of the year is January. In that month their first feast called Passover will take place on 14<sup>th</sup> of that month.

The second feast unleavened bread will come on 15<sup>th</sup> of that month and the third feast will take place on 16<sup>th</sup> in the same Nisan month. We call this feast of first fruits the “Harvest festival” and some churches would observe this festival. In Hebrew language it is called the first sheaf (sheaf means fruits) traditionally the Jews cut something in the fields on the mount of Olives and bring it for the Lord for the purpose of ceremony onto the mount Moria. Acceptance of this by God is an earnest or pledged in his part. After this was done people would get their harvest from their concerned fields. As far as the significance of this first fruit is concerned there is no room for any speculation. Among Corinthian church believers an error was cropping in their minds and apostle Paul wanted to correct it in his writings. It seemed some of the believers were infected by the deadly first century virus called “Gnosticism” According to their philosophy anything we touch or feel in this material world is evil. In the same way if a man raises physically from the grave it will be an evil body. They believed in spiritual resurrection but not in physical resurrection. Therefore, these Gnostic teachings in the church had in attraction to some believers. The final conclusion was that they accepted immortality of the soul but not physical resurrection.

Apostle Paul returned to the spot to set right that grave situation in its budding stage. He wrote to the Corinthian church believers in the following manner “Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead how some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (I Corinthians 15:12). To reject the very concept of physical resurrection of humanity amounts to the physical resurrection of the Christ Himself indirectly. These believers did not have faith in the physical resurrection. The outcome of their opinion was that everything that is physical is evil. There was a strong opposition towards the preaching’s of Paul and finally believers called him a liar because it was he who taught them that Messiah rose from His grave. Apostle Paul also said if Christ did not arise from the dead their faith was vain and his preaching vain.

Again to deny the resurrection of the Messiah to consign the loved one’s who had died in Christ to eternal damnation. By using unquestionable logic Paul brought the dying body of resurrection down to the depth of despair waste

on their own reason. Paul's argument was this if there is no bodily resurrection then Messiah did not rise from the dead. By his wonderful argument Paul could somehow come out of that controversial issue. He used just two words which not only saved him but also elevated him to a higher level. Those two words are but now Christ is risen from dead, it is said Paul used these two words for 18 times in the New Testament. For example, to the church in Ephesians he wrote you were without church as being aliens at that time and even from the commonwealth of Israel and their God but now you were with Christ cleaned in His blood. Paul's triumphant response was that Christ had risen from the dead and become first fruit of them. When God accepted the first fruit it became an assurance that the rest of crop could be taken out of the land as Christ Himself was the first fruit.

#### **FOURTH FEAST SHAVUOT**

It is a Hebrew word. In English it is called feast of the week. God told Jewish people that they should count seven weeks from the day of the first fruits. It comes to  $7 \times 7 = 49$  days and to that figure one more day will be added from the Bible then it would become 50 days and the fourth feast come after 50 days of the third feast. The feast is also called Pentecost (Acts 2:1) which means "Fifty" it is called so because the feast comes just after 50 days exactly as it depicts the Christ's resurrection. On this happy occasion, the children of Israel were to bring to the temple not only wheat, the first fruits of the harvest but also two loaves of leavened bread made of fine flour. Two loaves of bread the sheaf of barley and two loaves with leavened wheat flour. All this is pointed to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the beginning of the church age. The son of God arose from the grave on the day of first fruits and from that very day Christ spent 40 days with His disciples in post resurrection ministry. He told this to His disciples that it was necessary to ascend to heaven to his father and consult Him as their representative high priest for their benefits by His sacrifice for the sins of humanity.

In addition to that Christ told them He would send the Holy Spirit to be helpful to them in His absence. He commanded them to remain in Jerusalem even if they had to face some difficulties till they receive the Holy Spirit. He reminded them that John the Baptist baptized people including Jesus Himself with the water in Jordan river but the disciples would use the Holy Spirit for such things after saying all this Jesus ascended to heaven to His father and sent the Holy Spirit in 10 days as the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples they immediately began to speak in strange languages. During the time of the feast of the week any two loaves of leavened bread was brought to the temple. Those two loaves represented Jews and gentiles. Apostle Paul while writing to the Ephesians said for He is our peace who had made both Jews and gentiles as one and had broken down the middle wall of partition to make for Himself of Twain one new man. There was leaven in those two loaves because the believers have not yet been glorified. So there was still sin during that time within the church. The church is glorified providentially in the savior. But in experience, it has a long way to go through before being glorified. Since the church is body of Christ, it has still leaven within her. Therefore leaven had to be included in the two loaves before they were presented to God to Pentecost.

### **SALIENT POINTS**

1. **Passover** – This feast speaks about the redemption of Messiah and the lamb was sacrificed for the sins of humanity.
2. **Unleavened bread** – This feast speaks about the sanctification – Jesus was set apart unlike all other men. His body was not decayed in the grave or decomposed.
3. **The first fruit** - This feast tells about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Death could not lay his hands on Jesus. He conquered death and rose triumphantly from the grave.

4. **The feast of the week** – This feast speaks about the origin of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. A new covenant and church age were inaugurated which were instituted by Christ Himself in the upper room. The middle wall that separated both Jews and Gentiles was removed then the Lord called out the church which was His body.

The major events of the first coming of Messiah that occurred during the first four Jewish holidays

1. Christ was crucified on the day of Passover feast.
2. He was put in the grave on the day of feast of unleavened bread.
3. He was resurrected on the day of the feast of the first fruit. In ten days after Jesus ascended to his father sent the Holy Spirit to his disciples. It was called the day of Pentecost.



## SEVEN JEWISH HOLIDAYS – PART II

The redemption work of Jesus Christ was linked with his first coming 2000 years ago. This was promptly and clearly depicted in the first four spring holidays as feasts of Jewish people. There are no doubt both are historical and Biblical facts and they have their own importance in the life of Jews. The remaining three feasts will be discussed in detail as part second in this article. As pointed out already those three feasts are connected with the second coming of the Christ so the Jewish people must be anxiously awaiting their occurrence and the fulfillment of prophesy. The first four feasts that occurred in the spring fall holidays were fulfilled literally. Added to that they were celebrated properly in scheduled time in the first coming of Messiah. As a matter of fact, all the seven feasts were part and parcel of the life of Jesus. The Jews took these feasts to their hearts and enjoyed them whole heartedly.

### **FIFTH FEAST THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS**

“And the Lord spoke unto Moses saying speak unto the children of Israel saying in the seventh month in the first day of the month shall ye have a Sabbath a memorial of blowing of trumpets an holy convocation ye shall do no service work there in ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord” (Leviticus 23:25). This is called the feast of fall season. And the Jews called it in Hebrew language “Rosh hoshanah” which means head of the new year or new year. This feast would be celebrated in the beginning of the new year or at the start of civil year. According to Jewish calendar the name of that month is “Tishri.” And in our calendar this month comes in between (September and October). One important thing we have to remember in this context that this designation “Rosh hoshanah” is not given to the feast of trumpets in the scripture. But in the Bible this holiday is referred to a memorial of the blowing of trumpets. It is also said “Yon Teruah” which means blowing of trumpets. This is one of the seven holidays which centers around a musical instrument. It is also pointed out by some eminent scholars that the feast of trumpets must have being associated with the

destruction of Jerusalem temple by the Roman ruler Titus in 70 A.D. The trumpets feast with this information will take us back to the days of prophet Moses who guided and led Israel in the wilderness wanderings for 40 years about 3500 years ago.

As per the historical evidence the Jews gave more importance to this trumpet feast than all other feasts and equal importance to Yonkippur or the day of atonement. In Jerusalem this feast trumpet festival is not simply holiday but a highly holy day also. The gap between last feast of the spring season the feast of Pentecost and this trumpet feast is too long. That is we are now living in between Israelites fulfilled four feast and yet to be fulfilled fifth feast trumpets. The church age started with the commencement of Holy Spirit on that Pentecost day. The fifth feast trumpets will indicate the blowing of trumpets regarding the second coming of Messiah to rapture church and to judge the wicked ones. And that is the end of church age. During the time of Israelites rituals two types of trumpets were used one was long made of seamless silver and the second was a ram's horns. The Israelites in their wanderings for forty years used those trumpets on different occasions. The silver trumpet was to be blown for the purpose of gathering Israel for an assembly whenever God wished to see and speak to them from the tabernacle. Moses wanted to give them some instructions with the blowing of other trumpet. The children of Israel were summoned to the presence of God. God asked Moses to get prepared two trumpets of silver as single pieces. They would be used for the purpose of calling Israel for their assembly and for giving instructions on the journey of the camp. When the trumpet was blown the congregation gathered before the door of tabernacle. When they blew only one trumpet the princess who were heads of thousands of Israelites gathered themselves. The second main reason for blowing the trumpet was when Israelites had to get ready for war under divine direction. "And if ye go to war in your land against enemy that opposeth you then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets and ye shall be remembered before your Lord thy God and ye shall be saved from your enemies" (Jeremiah 4:19-21) (Joel 2:1).

Basing on this information about the importance of trumpets Joshua after Moses took the responsibility of leading Israelites to the promised land used the trumpet of war when he had to attack Jericho city. With divine blessing and direction he compassed the city and went round it for six days. And on the seventh day seven priests with the arch of covenant and with seven trumpets of rams horns went round the city along with warriors shouting loudly that God had given them Jericho city. All those incidents on the seventh day caused the city walls fall flat to the ground. In the same way, God used the services of Gideon to save His people Israelites from the menace of Midianites. These Midianites caused constant headache to Israel God was with him and guided him all the time. He divided his 300 men in two three companies and put trumpets in everybody's hand with empty pitchers and lambs horns within them. Then Gideon advised them to look at him to follow his instructions. He also told them to say the word "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." Then they had to blow trumpets and break the empty pitchers that were in their hands.

Nehemiah also followed the same method when he was constructing the walls of Jerusalem city he asked his builders to blow the trumpets as and when any untoward thing happens. As he anticipated some trouble shooters like Samaritans tried to disturb the progress of work. In such condition, he entrusted the construction work only to half of the workers and the remaining were ready with spears, shields, bows and arrows to fight any sudden attack. The builders also kept one hand on the wall for work and the other with a sword. God was with Nehemiah and so he could finish the construction on time. The prophets of Israelites spoke about the future day when God would directly involve in the affairs of man. The prophet called that auspicious day as "The day of the Lord" (Isaiah 13:6). The day of the Lord begins with the blow of trumpets. Then two events will follow quickly. The first one is the deliverance of the righteous by rapture and the second event will be deliverance of judgment about wicked people. Again the trumpets will be blown and the Messiah call his redeemed children to Himself through resurrection of rapture and then go to war against His enemies. The covenant of David was made with Israel king and this is on the

basis of Messiah's return as the son of David and lion of the tribe of Judah to take His rightful throne as the king of kings and the Lord of Lords.

The new covenant was made with Israel but the church has written into its provision for salvation. The Lord's table was the main source of Jewish Passover and with Jewish disciples but it is one of the ordinances of the church. The apostles were Jewish, the disciples were Jewish and the savior was also Jewish. Jesus Christ commanded his eleven Jewish disciples to evangelize the word of God even at the nook and corner of the world but it was known to people as the commission of the church. The church is built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets. Of course, the chief person for building of church is Jesus Christ himself. Israel and church are quite different to each other. Church is not Israel and Israel is not church. There are promises made for both yet there is contagious relationship between them. All blessings the church has been enjoying came out of the covenants and promises God made with Israel. So it should not appear strange or wonderful regarding the feast of trumpets. God gave to Israel as the fifth festival. It is meant to describe the rapture of church. It was made up of both Jews and Gentiles just before the out pouring of wrath of God during the day of the Lord.

Another important point we have to remember in this context is that the feast of trumpets occurs in the seventh month according to Jewish calendar "Tishri." It comes on the first day of the month with the indication of new moon at that time the slightest crescent can be seen also. Sometimes the slightest crescent might become obscure even the small clouds around it. This particular condition might cause the rabbis to add another day for that feast so that they could have the correct assessment of the crescent moon.

### **FEAST OF ATONEMENT OR YONKIPPUR**

"And the Lord said unto Moses saying also on the tenth day of seventh month there shall be a day of atonement. It shall be an holy convocation unto you and you shall afflict your souls and offer an offering by fire unto the Lord. And ye shall do no work in that same day for it is the day of an atonement to

make an atonement for you before the Lord your God.” (Leviticus 23:26-28). The fifth feast called trumpets would occur on the first day of the seventh month and on tenth of the same month the feast of atonement would occur.

The day of atonement would come nine days later on the tenth day of the same month so from the day of trumpets to the day of atonement there are only ten days. The Jews described these 10 days as wonderful to them. According to their tradition 3 books would be opened in heaven on the feast day of trumpets. The first one is the book of life for the righteous. The second one is the book of unrighteous and the third one is the book of those who are in between righteous and unrighteous. If a man is deemed to be righteous by the time of the feast of trumpets his name shall be written in the book of life for righteous for the coming year. If a man is deemed unrighteous his name will be written in the book of life for unrighteous and he will not survive the coming year. If a man is deemed in between the judgment would be delayed from the feast of trumpets to the day of atonement. God will give that period of time to the people of that type to repent before the book is closed and sealed.

This statement appears to be very hard and disinteresting. King David said to that kind of people in suitable words. He said that kind of people must be blotted out of the book of life and not to be written with the righteous. And Moses also pleaded with God on behalf of the stiff necked Israel “Yet know of thou forgive their sins – and the Lord said unto Moses whosoever hath sinned against me him will I blot out of my book.” (Exodus 32:32-33). This dictum is hinted in the New Testament also in connection with the “Great white throne judgment.” The beloved apostle John wrote these lines during ten days of awe the Jewish would observe on the first day by going to an ocean or river. Then they will recite a prayer and quote some lines or read from Psalms or from the book of Micah in which they request God for His mercy and forgiveness before the close of the books for the next year. The correct meaning of Hebrew prayer is “You will cast.” They search even their pockets and if they find any crumbs of leavened bread they will throw those pieces into the water because keeping or eating of leavened bread is a sin. On the day of the feast of trumpets the church

will be ruptured and the day of the Lord's wrath commences upon the earth and it will be a very short time. At the time of physical return of God to earth the Jews who survive the purging of our Lord on the earth will be saved. Then God destroys all nations that go against Jerusalem. He wants to show mercy upon the house of David and inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Israelites day of atonement required a shedding of blood. But the temple of Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D. and as a result the functioning of priesthood and sacrifices came to a stand still. The offering of the sacrifices also came to abrupt end what they had to do in such conditions because it is blood that makes atonement of the soul the total destruction of the temple, nonfunctioning of the priesthood and sacrifices should have taught the Jews a lesson by reminding them that Christ the son of Abraham and the son of David was once and for all their sacrifice for the sins committed by them. Instead of accepting Jesus as their Messiah who literally sacrificed His life for the sins of all humanity they followed the leadership of "Yohanam" a rabbi and substituted with their good deeds in the places of sacrifices. After sometime they added prayer and fasting to good deeds as a means to achieve God's acceptance. In doing so they remembered their patriarch Abraham who believed in the Lord. They believed and counted Abraham's belief and faith towards the God and praised his righteousness. Some of the orthodox Jews followed the same praying and fasting to achieve God's mercy and forgiveness. It was a testimony in olden days among many orthodox Jews that God required sacrificial blood for sin. This day of atonement for eradication of sinful life was not only for Israel but also for every individual in the society.

After Jesus returns to the earth many will repent before the book of life is closed. The Gentiles were also in his mind which He expressed in his Olivet discourse. When the son of man comes in his glory He will be followed by a large number of angels and then He shall sit upon the throne of His glory. All the nations shall be gathered before Him and He shall separate from one and another as a shepherd keeps sheep and goats separately. He will keep sheep on His right hand side and goats on His left then Jesus will say to the right hand side sheep

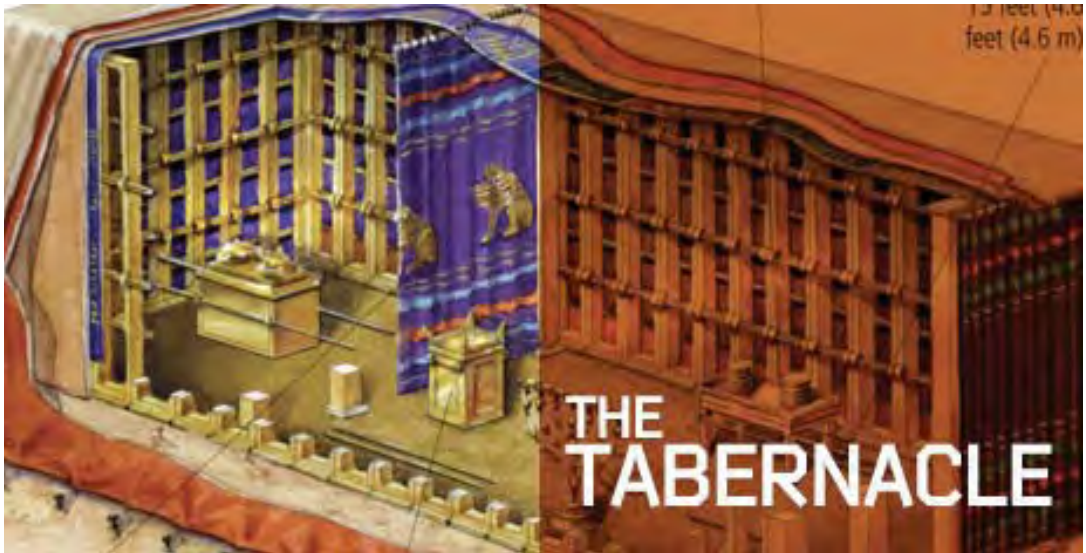
“You are blessed by my father come and occupy the kingdom which is prepared for you with the foundation of the word. Those were the children of Jacob who inhabited messianic kingdom and who are still in mortal bodies. In the end both Jews and Gentiles would be saved by grace through faith apart from works.

**THE FEAST OF TABERNACLE:**

“And the Lord spoke unto Moses saying speak unto the children of Israel saying the fifteenth day of the seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacle for seven days unto the Lord and ye shall take you on first day the bows of trees braches of palm trees, bows of thick trees and willows of the brook and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days and ye shall keep in a feast unto the Lord (seven days in the year). It shall be a statute for ever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month, ye shall dwell in booths for seven days all that are Israelite born shall delve in booths.” (Leviticus 23: 32-33). On the fifteenth day of Tashri month the seven day feast of the tabernacle will commence. It is the seventh and final feast. According to our calendar it occurs in October. To celebrate that festival the Jews would erect huts or booths with bed rushes or palm leaves etc. those small huts which were temporary remind them their fore fathers who built such huts during their Exodus wanderings. Everyday of the seven days feast of the tabernacle would be filled with joy and important festivity. The high priest along with the other priests and thousands of worshippers would go on a precession on the final day of the feast and descend down from the temple mount Moria. They will take rest for a while on the steps of temple and at the pool of “Siloam” the chief priest would fill the pitcher with water and again go back to the temple mount through the water gate. The chief priest had to go to the big stone altar and pour water out of the pitcher into a silver basin.

According to their belief this water ceremony would be considered purity for the purpose of getting rains at correct times, so that they have good harvest. It was also their belief that the water ceremony would certainly invoke God thereby He will provide necessary water for better crop and good blessings.

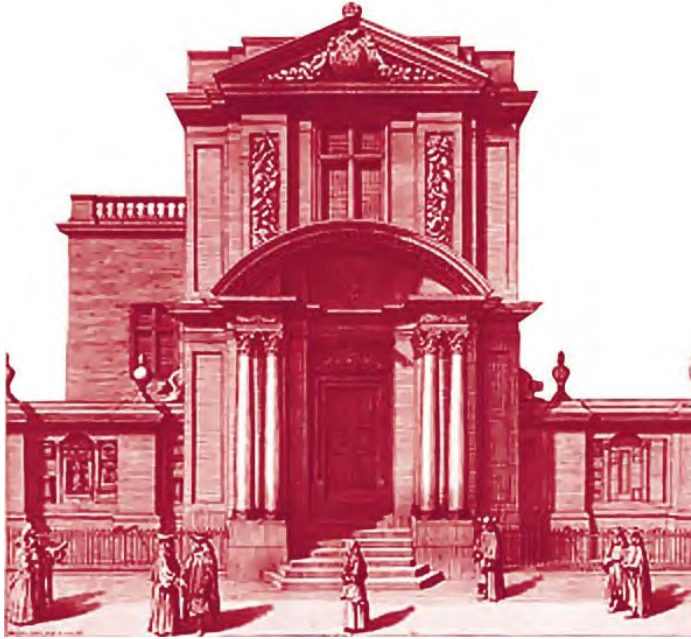
Then in the last day being the last great feast of tabernacle the Jesus would stand and shout saying “If anybody is thirsty let him come to me and drink he that believeth on me and as the scripture hath said out of his belly flow rivers of living water. We are told so far he would provide water then living water and the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The feast of tabernacle eloquently speaks about the Messianic kingdom of a new beginning without the ravages of curse or sin. The seven feasts foretold the major redemption work of Messiah 1500 years before he was born. In a very short time the trumpets will blow the final blast of this age regarding His second coming then the dead in Christ will be resurrected. The living in Christ will be ruptured. The long night resolves into a glorious new day for all those who have accepted his invitation and attend His appointed time.





## LOCATION OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

by Kevin Howard



According to the Bible and historical facts, the correct location of King Solomon's temple is on the Mount Moriah. The Jewish people respected not only the temple building but also the temple mount because of its geographical location. As we see in the Bible Abraham got a son Isaac when he was about hundred years old with the blessing of God. Then God asked him to sacrifice his only son on the mount Moriah to test his faith but Abraham simply obeyed God and received abundant blessings and became father of many nations.

After about one thousand years king David established his capital city upon this same mountain. Then King Solomon was instructed to build the first Gods temple on this mountain. So Biblically as well as historically this mountain has its own importance. In addition to that, in 586 B.C. the king of Babylon Nebuchadnezzar plundered the city of Jerusalem and the temple, and then he took about fifty thousand people as captives to Babylon, including some

intelligent men like Prophet Daniel. Who used to pray to God three times a day by turning toward this mountain and even Ezekiel saw Messianic visions of this mountain.

Late some of the exited Jews returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple on the same foundations and called it second temple. Even today the Jewish people pray to God by turning towards the temple mount. According to the Lord, the mount Moriah with its beautiful landscape city of Jerusalem became the centre of the world. One prophet writes in the following manner. Thus saith the Lord God, this is Jerusalem, I set it in the midst of the nation and the countries that are round about her". (Ezekiel 5:5).

The renowned Hebrew world map illustrates this truth with the medieval world pictured as a three leaf clover. Each leaf indicates a continent (Asia, Europe and Africa) and these three leaves joined at one place called Jerusalem. If we study the history we can find more religions and tourist people have streamed to this mountain in those days, if anybody wanted to go from one continent to another for any purpose, he must go through Jerusalem only.

I happened to look into some books of Biblical history in America I was surprised to find that even Jesus Christ met some Indians who went through Jerusalem on their business. If seemed they told Jesus about Indian Epics also. This example shows that Jerusalem became the nerve center of the world traders in olden days. In the Bible some important references are made about Jerusalem. It is said all nations shall flow into it, in the Messianic future. Biblically the temple mount is considered to be the spiritual center of the world.

My main purpose of presenting this article to the readers is to gave a clear idea about the locating of the temple with the following doubts

1) Where is Zion? 2) Who selected that place? 3) What is its future?

Exact location of Zion: Zion is located on the temple mount. Many passages have been found in the Bible regarding the correct location of the low mountain called "mount Zion" (psalm 50:2) and in future the messiah shall reign from this

mount Zion (Isaiah 24:23). Mount Zion is the place of the name of our Lord of hosts. Hebrew prophets called Zion, the mountain of the house of God. That name “Har Habayet” remains as its most common name in Hebrew language today. So the temple mount and mount Zion both are the same. They are the names of Gods dwelling place on earth. Zion is the geographical name of the mount that’s as temple mount is functional name of the mount.

The word “Zion” appears 7 times in the New Testament. Some scholars are of the opinion that the New Testament refers allegorically to Zion for example, the writer of “Hebrews’ asserts but ye are come unto the mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the living Jerusalem and to an innumerable company of angels (Hebrew 12:22).

This verse does not give an indication that Zion is a church or it is located in heaven. It gives us the idea that those who are under new covenant will inherit internal access to three things mount Zion, the new Jerusalem, which will reside on it and the presence of the holy angels it is clearly pointed out in the book of revelation by (st.john 21:2) that in future this heavenly city of new Jerusalem will descend from heaven and settle forever on the enormously expanded mount Zion. John also saw in his vision the second coming of Jesus the messiah and 1,44,000 servants standing on the earthly mount Zion and heard the classical musical symphony that was coming from heaven.

Therefore, mount Zion is always referred to as a physical and literal earthly mountain upon which the New Jerusalem comes down and settles on this mount. So Zion is an earthly mount only. The authentic information reveals that the believers as mount Zion is located on mount Moriah range. It is a specific or separate hill top on the Moriah mountain range. Generally individual mountains are part and parcel of larger mountain range. It is like the “Mount Everest” the highest peak of the Himalayan mountain range with (29,024 ft) high on the earth’s surface and also the largest part of Himalayan mountain range in Asia.

Therefore there is no contradictory opinion about this fact, regarding the temple being located on the mount Zion and also on the mount Moriah (II

Chronicles 3:1). That is to say there is close relationship between the mount moriah and God’s people. According to scripture, God commanded Abraham to go to the land of Moriah with his son Isaac, then ascend one of the mountains he would show and there he should sacrifice his son at that particular place. This incident clearly indicated that God was interested at a particular place on that Moriah mountain area.

In reality moment Zion is surrounded by beautiful steep valleys and mountains. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem so the Lord is round about His chosen people from henceforth and even forever”. (Psalm 125:2). It is said the temple mount is lower than the other peaks around it. It is estimated that the preferable height of mount Zion is (2,428 ft or 740 meters) Zion has a permanent link with the city of Jerusalem the same Jerusalem is also King David’s capital city located on the mount Zion. Because at this Jerusalem is known as the city of Zion as it is built on the mount Zion.

The name ‘Zion’ appeared suddenly in 1000 B.C. when king David captured Jebusites fortress on the southern ridge of mount Zion. Then David took the strong hold of Zion and that later became the city of David (II Samuel 5:7). Thus the jebusites as long as it was in their control changed the name Salem into “Jebus” again in the reign of king David it was renamed as Jerusalem and since then it became Israel’s eternal capital by divine command.

Geographically mount Zion consisted of David Jerusalem (II Samuel 5:7) on its southern nine acres ridge and the temple on its northern seventeen-acre hill top. The flat area that separated these two places is called “ophel”. So without any further discussion or doubt the word Zion is sometimes referred to the city Jerusalem and sometimes to the hill top of Zion (the temple mount). That is to say the temple was located in both Zion (in mount) and Jerusalem (the city). And the psalmist sang in Salem also is his tabernacle and his dwelling place in Zion” (psalm 76:2). Both the references one true God non controversial.

In Hebrew language the word “city” is considered to be feminine gender and the city Jerusalem is located on mount Zion. So Jerusalem is often called

the daughter of Zion. The psalmist said “I may show forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion. And the prophet also exhorted Israelis capital concerning the Mesiah rejoices greatly. O daughter of Zion, shout, o Lord daughter of Jerusalem, behold thy king cometh unto thee” (Zechariah 9:9).

The site of the temple is supported and accepted by the scripture as well as by the archeologists. King David rejoiced great is the Lord and greatly to be praised in the city of our Lord I the mountain of his holiness. The joy of the whole earth is mount of Zion and on the northern side the city of the great king (psalms 48:1).

Selection of Zion: since Zion is important Biblically and historically a number of questions may arise in the minds of the readers.

- 1) Why was mount Zion chosen for the location of the holy temple?
- 2) Who must have selected that place for that purpose?
- 3) What were the historical events surrounding its selection?

Mount Zion was chosen by God Himself as the suitable location for the holy temple. This is a settled and authentic fact mentioned in the Bible. God chose it for his dwelling purpose. He has desired it for his habitation. He said “This is my rest forever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it”. (Psalms 132:13-14). God chose to keep His name there. He selected that place, for the house of sacrifice”. God has kept His eternal affection on mount Zion only. In His sovereign plan God has always proposed to dwell among His men from the mount Zion for this truth, there is historical evidence also.

Long before the construction of Solomon’s temple on this mount, there was earthly priesthood established by God anointed high priest Melchizedek. He was the grandson of Canaan and Canaan the grandson of Noah. He was a shepherd boy lived in the area of “mount Hararath”. One day God anointed him and asked him to go to the distant land of mount Moriah and build a town on His name. He did accordingly and called that town Salem and later it became Jerusalem. He remained there permanently by serving bread and wine to the

passers by on the altar as the high priest of the most high God. Later he became king also to that place we have the Biblical reference as Melchizedek king of Salem (genesis 14:18).

Melchizedek was known as the first high priest king of Salem, and king of righteousness. He wrote a book “The roots of mount Hararath” wherein he said about the family history of Noah and the genealogy of mankind. All these incidents speak about mount Zion one thousand years before the construction of Solomon’s temple. Even father Abraham got the chance to meet Melchizedek and pay his tithes on mount Zion. And Abraham received a shepherd stick from Melchizedek as a memory. So there was earlier priesthood and altar for sacrifice on the mount Zion about 1000years before David God commanded Abraham “take now thy son thine only son Isaac whom thou lovest and get thee into the land of Moriah and offer him there for burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of (genesis 22:2).

The place of the sacrifice was not selected casually or abruptly. God commanded Abraham to travel three days to the Land of Moriah Mountains. After he reached that place, God reveled to him the exact spot on the mountain top (mount Zion). God did not send him to a hill top which was much closer to his place Hebron. God sent him only to mount Zion because he had already set his affections upon that.

At the time of sacrifice Abraham could not understand why God gave so much imposture to that mount Zion. But he called that peace “Jehovah Jireh” and since that time the name has been continued even today and it shall be seen in the mountain of God. Abraham also referred to this mount Zion as the mountain of the Lord. Mount Zion belonged to go Almighty. The Lord confirmed the Abraham covenant on the mount Zion. He said with his solemn oath. By myself have I sworn saith the Lord, because thou hast done this thing and hast not withheld thy son thine only son. That in blessing I will bless thee and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven and the sand which is on the sea shore and thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice.

The writer of the “book of Hebrews” also referred to this most important event that occurred on the mount Zion and argued the eternal aspect of Abrahamic covenant. The covenant was promised not by an ordinary God; but the creator of the universe. There was a coincidence that God took this oath on this place; where in the holy temple would be built on the same spot after about one thousand years by King Solomon. God has eternally preferred that place as his residence on that mount Zion God actually dwelt with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden from the earthly throne on the holy mount of God.

The Jewish people believed that Adam was created on the mount Zion. But the scripture does not give any satisfactory clue about mount Zion as Eden’s mountain of God. Prophet Moses the author of “the book of Genesis” also knows about Abraham’s mountain of the Lord. He affirmed that the mountain continued to be known to the people with the same name “to this day” it was the place of God’s oath to Abraham. But neither he nor any one of Israel of his day had seen it.

God promised that when Israel came into that land. He would reveal to them the exact location of that mount Zion which he had chosen as His permanent dwelling place. And there is no other approved site mentioned in the Bible than this for the construction of the temple. The location was exact and unchangeable. Let us hope and believe that one day Israel would certainly identify the place of the temple only on the mount Zion. According to the scripture it is from this place that “the Lord shall reign forever even thy God O Zion unto all generations”.

God has wholeheartedly desired that mount Zion. King David established mount Zion as the proper site for the ark of the covenant of God before the temple was built he declared war against Jebusites a dominating tribe at that time in Jerusalem. David won the battle with the blessing of God, and immediately he went and brought the Ark of God from the house of Obenadal into the city of David happily. Then he offered sacrifices on the stone altar that was built by him. He understood that the temple of the Lord was to be constructed on the mount Zion only, but he waited patiently for the divine revelation; as God revealed in the case of Abraham.

The choice of the Temple mount by God was not an alternative selection. It has been in the mind of God for a long time. He has great passion zeal and fervor for that location. But regarding people from the twelve tribes of Jacob, he chose only the tribe of Judah along with mount Zion. God loves the gates of moment Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob. The Lord declared concerning Zion “he that loves you loves the apple of his eyes” (Zechariah 2:8). God loves Zion immensely.

God concentrated His affection mount Zion, because his sovereignty decided to dwell among men from there. So He said this is my rest forever here will I dwell for I have desired it”. But there is some controversy over God’s choice of Zion. Zionism is an ideology that God has given the land of Israel to Jacob and to his descendants for a national homeland and Jerusalem as her eternal capital. Zionism is not racist. It does not have any prejudice against Arabs or any people of any religion like Islam.

This Zionism is originated in the Bible itself. It comes out of oft-repeated promises by “one true God” that the land of Israel belongs to Jewish people. Twenty six hundred years before Mohammed established Islamic religion and twenty six hundred years before the Arabs entire into Israel from the Arabian Peninsula, this land was promised to Abraham as an everlasting possession. Then God repeated the same promise to Isaac to Jacob and to Israel during the time of Moses brought them from bondage sin Egypt and again to Israel at the time of Joshua and again to Israel at the time of the age and Moses in his wonderful farewell speech to Israelites accosted the nation and said “go in and possess the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers. Abraham Isaac and Jacob to give unto them and to their seed”.

Zionism recognizes God’s sovereign situation regarding the land of Israel because God has every right to do whatever he wished his choices are always righteous and just. But the world rejects the Lord’s eternal choice of the land of Israel as the national homeland of the Jewish people then Jerusalem as her eternal capital and mount Zion as the temple mount. This controversy and hatred toward Jewish people may continue and even indentify until the end of the age.



The Lord declared, he would make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people then all enemies might join together against Jerusalem. At that time he will take the chance to crush the reflection of the mankind once and for all in future day of the Lord. For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations. His fury upon all their armies and finally all of them would be defeated and delivered to the slaughterer because it is the day of the Lord, the enemies of mount Zion will not succeed in their aspirations as they stand against God and scripture.

Mount Zion was legally purchased by King David. So the present step taken by the Muslims about mount Zion is quite illegal and the Jews may have to proceed legally basing on the historical transfer of the land to David. According to Biblical history that land was purchased by King David 3000 years ago. For the purpose of the Holy temple and this happened sixteen hundred years before the appearance of Mohammed without any controversy. It was not given to David as a free gift, nor did he take it by force. He paid the full amount of the market value at that time and possessed the land and then left it to the custodianship of Jewish people for the temple of God.

The transfer of the title was not lost. The historical record the physical location the parties the terms and the sale price of the property are all still in existence. The record of the purchase of mount Zion is translated into more than one hundred languages and the matter contained in hundreds of millions of copies of the Bible, and can be seen in countless homes hotels and places of worship on the planet. So the present struggle of the Muslims for the ownership of mount Zion is baseless and unjustified. One can understand that they must be doing only to peek up quarrel with God's people (the Jews).

Most of the readers are under the impression that possessing mount Zion must be the plan of some radicals, but occupations of the land of others by force or power does not claim ownership.. History has all the details of the ownership of mount Zion. They took it by force in 638 A.D. with the conquest of Jerusalem. The fact is even King David was not the owner of the temple mount though he paid the money; it was given over to the Lord who had chosen it as his eternal home on earth. The Lord called mount Zion” my mountain and “my earth hill”.

The temple mount was confirmed by the Lord. He sent fire upon David’s altar in the thrusting floor to confirm his approval. The Lord reconfirmed the same to King Solomon “and the Lord appeared to Solomon by night and said unto him “I have heard thy prayer and have chosen this place for myself for a house of sacrifice”.

This temple mount is in the center of a spiritual battle and it has to be delivered by God alone. This is true now and it will be true in future. Those who hate Zion also hate the God of Zion. But the God of Israel is alive. His plan for the ages is still there he will ultimately deliver mount Zion. This promise is cock sue. He will return to Zion. He will come as a young lion roaring for his prey. So, shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion and for the hill there of.

Thus saith the Lord I am returned unto Zion and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem and Jerusalem shall be called the city of truth and the mountain of the Lord of hosts, the holy mountain. He will come to establish His kingdom for Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace and for Jerusalem sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness and salvation there of as a lamp that burnethe.

The purchase and ownership of mount Zion is recorded in two separate Biblical accounts. The details are also confirmed by another summary statement.

Kind David in the later years of his reign commissioned his top military general Joab to conduct a military census of Israel male population. David did not consult God before he took that hasty step of ordering for census. His pride of past victories must have prompted him to do so. Actually any censuses were forbidden at that time. Any way after some time Joab had returned to Jerusalem with his officers and the result, to meet the king. But the king David’s heart was broken already by that time. He realized the depth of his pride and sin which made him to forget God and His help. So, God got angry and sent a prophet by name ‘gad’ to offer him three choices for divine punishment. They are.

- 1) Seven years of famine in the nation
- 2) Three months of flight from invading armies.
- 3) Three days of pestilence across the nation.

Now David was at the mercy of God and he chose the third one plague. He repented for his blunder and confessed. “Let us fall into the hand of God for His mercies are great and let me not fall into the hand of man”. His foolishness caused plague that ravaged the entire nation as a result 70,000 young men who were in the list of census died. David and his leaders wore black sack cloths during the three days and lay on their faces.

On the third day David looked outside from the palace and saw the mighty fortress of Zion. He recollected the conquest of Jerusalem for a while. Then how he came to that city with his army. Which was called ‘Jebus’ at that time He remembered how the Jebusite army men mocked at him and boasted of themselves by saying they could protect their city only with their blind and lame people. In such circumstances he repented how God had given him victory after victory and how he crushed the philistines and other enemies with the powerful hand of God.

He repented for all the help he received from God and shed tears. He became so foolish and sinful in his thinking of past victories. He thought they were all due to his own strength and abilities. And God saw all this wonderful change in David and “thundered from heaven”. He said it is enough. The fiery angel was readily standing there for any action. This angel stood on top of mount Zion with flaming sword in his hand like a mighty colossus between heaven and earth. He stretched his flaming sword toward Jerusalem ready to destroy.

Then David cried unto the Lord. “Let thine hand I pray be against me”. (II Samuel 24:17). God heard his prayer and sent the prophet ‘Gad’ again to David with a message of mercy. David had to build an altar in the threshing floor on the top of mount Zion and do scarifies to avoid plague. He did it and the plague subdued.

David and his men came out of the royal palace, and began to ascend through the fields of Arau'nah (Orman) and saw him threshing in the early summer heat. He prostrated before the king and the king asked him he wanted to purchase his threshing floor of the top for a sacrifice. And Arau'nah (or man) gladly offered that piece of land as a free gift. But David did not want to accept free gift. He said he would not offer sacrifices in the land if he get it freely.

Finally David purchased the threshing floor and oxen for 50 shekels of silver and the complete hill top for 600 shekels of gold. Then he built stone altar on the revealed location and offered oxen as burnt offerings and peace offerings. He offered wheat also as meal offerings. God answered his prayer by sending fire to the altar to consume the sacrifice. Now the word of God, and a permanent place for his temple were mount Zion and that hill top remained forever as temple mount. Later king Solomon built the temple on that spot.

The prophetic scripture reveals that mount Zion was the historical location of David's throne and it will be also the future location of Messiah's throne. Then the future worldwide rebellion of Armageddon against divine rule will be averted by the strong decision of the Lord. He said "Set my king upon my holy hill of Zion" (psalm 2:6).

Messiah as the foundation stone and corner stone will be laid at mount Zion. On that mount the Lord shall prepare his Messianic supper, after that the Lord will completely wipe out the curse of suffering and death. As the daughter of Zion Jerusalem is his holy city. This is the only city that God has chosen out of many on earth.

The eternal promises made by the Lord, concerning mount Zion have not been nullified. He will stick on to his promises and fulfill them at the appropriate time. The temple of the Lord shall be built. He will rule through Messiah in mount Zion. Hence forth even forever. On that day the righteous will exalt the greatness of the Lord. He will be greatly promised and worshipped in the holy city of Jerusalem and in the holy mount Zion. That Zion will remain beautiful forever and a joy to the entire world. It will be the mountain of the Lord's house and the city of the great king.

## MESSIAH- THE CORNERSTONE

“So, Solomon built the house and finished it (I kings 10:14)

The Lords temple was a house declared Solomon in his dedication prayer. I have surely built thee, and house to dwell in a settled place for thee to abide in forever (I kings 8:13). And Solomon received immediate response from the Lord for his prayer. God answered “I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication that thou hast made before me. I have hallowed this house which thou hast build to put my name there forever and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually” (I kings 9:3).

God Almighty hallowed that temple as the sacred one on earth. It was not a house for men but to the Lord God. That was the only house in which God wished to live a money house in which God wished to live among his people. According to his promise to Solomon the location of the place for the temple would continue as the eternal place of God’s name and focus of his eyes and heart. In the words of God king David was a spiritual giants. David wrote more than seventy psalms and what all he wrote were devoted to his life and exploits. It we steady the Bible carefully, we can find half of the books have mentioned the name of David. The Lord also amazingly described David as of a man after his own heart. (I Samuel 13:14).

In spite of all his short comings and sin David loved God with all his humility out of his abundant love towards God. He revealed his heart for the house of the Lord and for the footstool of our God. David in his heart of hearts possessed the burning passion for the temple and for mount Zion. God understood the mind of David and will please I his heart. He had great thirst to worship the Lord in his house. He said “one thing I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life”.

David exhibited his strong desire in the psalms. He said “lord I have loved the habitation of thy house and also the zeal of thin house hath eaten me up”. His governments utmost priority was to construct a permanent building

for God's temple. And he wished to start the work as soon as he would be able to put his kingdom in safe and secure. He passionately desired and searched for the exact to location of the site of the temple. This was recorded forever in the liturgy assent psalms.

“Lord remembers David and all his afflictions. How he swear unto the Lord and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob. Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house not go up into my bed, I will not give sleep to mine eyes or slumber to mine eyelids. Until I find out a place for the Lord a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob (psalm 32:1-5).

King David know the fact that the location of the temple would be somewhere on the mount Moriah so, with that confidence he brought the Ark of the Covenant to Zion to wait for God's revelation. David actually made extensive preparations for the construction of the temple. He collected enough funds purchased the required materials. Big stones were cut for the walls. Laborers were planned. Even the priesthood arrangements were made from the Levites. But all those steps David had taken become futile because one day the prophet of God came to him and cleared that David would not build the holy temple of God.

He was a man of war and shed so much blood in the battle and killed many people so, God permitted David only to make necessary preparations, especially procuring the material for building the temple and for the construction of the temple God preferred David's son Solomon only. Solomon means “peace” therefore according to the prophesy David entrusted the task of constructing Gods temple to Solomon and he whole heartedly accepted that. Then David gave his final address to the nation and all Israel extended their full support for building the temple.

The people responded to David with their hearts. His government leaders and others liberal contributed abundantly their gold and silver to the temple work. And finally David's deathbed request of the Lord was that he should empower Solomon to build the temple, of Israel. David was consumed by his

fiery zeal for the house of the Lord. It seemed some people had presented some models of the temple. But those models appeared to be contrary to the historical records of the scripture.

The design of the temple was neither of David nor of Solomon. It was not a Phoenician architects remake of the tabernacle. It was not even an Israelite version of a Phoenician temple. It was not a model born from Jewish culture.

But the Lord Himself designed his house, and David received that model by a special revelation from the spirit of the Lord (I chronicles 28:11-12). The hand of the Lord came upon David to create the written blue print and to understand the technical details. The design was received with full details including the amounts of gold and silver to be used for each vessel. That is to say the plan included the layout of the courts, the chambers the divisions of priests and the Levites and additional furniture. King Solomon for his temple followed the general design of the wilderness Tabernacle prototype.

It had only two rooms with similar furniture and it was surrounded by a courtyard. In spite of the wonderful plan of God and procurement of everything, there arose some problems. First, the temple was enormous in size, because it had to accommodate a large number of people that come from all over the nation on certain occasions. Secondly, the temple was a permanent structure of timber and stones in the midst of a geographical country instead of a mobile temple like forty years as sojourners in the wilderness. Any way King Solomon continued his preparations during the first three years of his reign.

In order to set right the site, Solomon filed up the uneven valleys with earth and made the flat even on the top of money Zion on which the temple had to be built. We may find some more authentic information from the works of flavies Josephus (Antiquities of the Jews 8:3-9).

And finally construction of the temple began in the spring of 967 B.C. by that time it was about 480 years that the children of Israel came to their Promised Land Canaan from Egypt with constant effort. Solomon's temple could be completed in seven and half years time, in the fall of 960 B.C. anyhow God's

temple was constructed and completed with the moral support of Phoenician king Hiram, who was a close friend of Solomon. That old Phoenicia was modern Lebanon. The country happened to supply labor, fine cedar fir and Algom wood to the temple. Solomon contracted expert Phoenician crafts men to carve timbers and fashion all the other items of the temple. All the necessary items were supplied to Solomon, for Israel's wheat, barley, oil, olives wine and figs and also for copper from Solomon's mines in Ezion Geber near the northern most point of the "red sea".

The Phoenicians were expert's on the sea activities. So instead of having the wood a hundred miles over the land the logs were made into rafts and floated down the Mediterranean Sea coast from Lebanon then the wood was received at the Israelis sea port of "Jaffa" and transported to Jerusalem; which was away thirty miles about from the seaport. The construction was done mostly with Israeli workers.

As Solomon required more laborers' for the nature of construction, he created more workforce of 1, 83,300 Israeli laborers' from then 30,000 were entrusted with some work in Lebanon 70,000 as transporters 80,000 as stone movers and the remaining 3,300 as over all supervisors all the workers maintained great revenue in their work and also the workers guarded the sanctity of the temple while working.

King Solomon spent huge amount and costly material. The items were like stone wood, precious materials, and costly rubies and gem stones. It required years to gather all those items in the ancient world. Scripture testifies that David prepared abundantly before his death and on his death bed he bore witness of his heart.

He said "I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God, the gold things to be made of gold, and the silver for things of silver and brass for the things of brass, the iron for things of iron and wood for the things of wood. Onyx stones, and stones to be set glistening stones and of dives colors and all manner of precious stones and marbles, stones in abundance". (I chronicle 29:2)



These precious and costly stones were wonderfully decorated in the temple and later king Herod followed the same patron. When he renovated the second temple. Lebanese cedar was the main wood used in the temple. In the sermons of the holy temple cedar wood was used to treat leprosy. It was also used to the sacrifice of red heifer. This cedar wood has its own importance in the Bible and so this wood ‘cedar’ was used about 75 times in the Bible.

In addition to cedar some other costly wood was also used. The “fir” wood probably cypress or Jumper wood was imported from Lebanon. It was used for the main doors the ceiling panels, and for the floor of holy places the neat wood was ‘Algum’ a highly designed wood. This was also imported from Lebanon and from ‘ophr’ some people identified this ‘ophr’ that it is located somewhere in southern Arabian Peninsula and some other believed that it is in India only.

This algum is beautiful dark red sandalwood. It was used for stepped terraces and for the temple harps and lyzs like musical instruments. Then the next one was olive wood with its wonderful dark and light shade that was used for the doors of the holy of holies and for the pasts of main doors. The temple was decorated with gold, silver and variety of precious stones. The interior of the building was completely covered with gold. Huge quenelles of colored stones and marbles were used. Immeasurable quantity of silver was used for temple utensils, lamps, stands, tables and vessels.

The construction value of the temple was really amazing. Huge quantity of gold and silver, used for the temple came from four sources. They were the treasures of the Tabernacle the donations received from people, then King David’s personal collection and from his government leaders. The roughly estimated cost of the precious metals like gold and silver were about 218 billion dollars. Solomon spent very lavishly for God’s house. “The sanctum sanctorum” or holy of holies alone was overlaid with an incredible 600 talents (22 ½ tons) of pure gold (II chronicle 3:8).

The temple was considered to be the most expensive building per square foot in the history of the world. The two room building cost went up to more than 61 million dollars per square foot. that cost was only for gold and silver used there but the cost of massive bronze, iron cedar, Fir olivewood, ophir precious stones quarried lime-stones, marbles, granites and tapsters were not include in that amount and also the labor charges for seven and half years the transportation of different items, the storage and the cost of the real estate (the land David possessed on mount Zion) were not included in that total cost.

So all these items and their in the temple was astonishing. David testified and wished that God's house had to be exceedingly great in magnificence, fame and splendor before the eyes of all nations (I chronicles 22:5). Solomon took it for granted that the temple reflected the incomparable greatness of God. "and the house which I built is great for great is our God above all Gods". He felt the house was to be a testimony to the world that all the people of the world may know that the Lord is God and there is none else".

Thus saith the Lord, "The heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool" where is the house that ye build into me and where is the place of my rest? For all these things had mine handmade and all those things have been faith the Lord feet to this man will I look even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembled at my word (Isaiah 66:1-2). So God is looking for men to trust him.

Solomon's temple was built on a bed rock foundation. As recorded in scripture in the fourth year was the foundation of the house of the Lord laid" (I king 6:37). The foundation rested on the trusting floor which David purchased on Mount Zion (II chronicles 3:1). Then the temple was constructed with heavy lime-stone blocks instead of modern conceit brick and mortar these stones became very costly because of this and different to carry enormous size. He is said many of them were about fifteen feet and even more in length. (I king 7:10). And they were weighted far more than the largest stone of the pyramids in Egypt.

The cornerstone – among all the stones used for the walls the cornerstone was the most precious one it was a massive and critical stone in the temple in Hebrew language it was called “head of the corner”(Rosh pinah). The Hebrew word for ‘head is ‘Rosh’ he same word often translated as chief and indicates that the cornerstone was the primary or most significant stone. It is a foundation cornerstone most critical and important of the entire building. It would be laid first at the corner and in the foundation course. All the other stones were built upon that and aligned with the cornerstone. As a matter of fact, it would be the key (key) to the stability and symmetry of the whole building.

The Lord liked the Messiah to the cornerstone. Behold I lay in Zion force foundation stone a tried stone a precious cornerstone a sure foundation he that believeth shall not make haste (Isaiah 28:16). The message little is not surprising because the future temple will be built by messiah himself. And it shall be the seat of his government but the person and work of the messiah is the spiritual cornerstone upon which Gods entire eternal kingdom is built. The rabbis recognized the messianic nature of Isaiah’s prophecy. Rosh Israel’s great medieval scholar paraphrased this verse “ I have set up the king Messiah who shall be in Zion as a fortress stone an expression of a fortunes and strength” ‘Rosh pinah’ (head of the corner) is also name of a small Galilee town near the city of “safed”.

The name of that village preserves the rabbi’s tradition that at the end of age the messiah will appear in Galilee. As the rabbis died the New Testament writers and redoes also recognized the Messianic nature of Isaiah’s prophecy. Apostle Paul taught that the household of God (Jewish and gentile believers of God) is built as a spiritual temple upon the messiah as the chief cornerstone.

It seems the prophecy of prophet Isaiah about the Messiah contained some basic and hidden truth let us examine his prophetic words.

- 1) The messianic cornerstone will be brought by the Lord but not by man. This truth is a parallel to the prophet Daniel who called Messiah the stone cut of the mountain without hands.(that is by God .Daniel 2:45).
- 2) The cornerstone will rule the kingdom from Zion.

- 3) The Lord's cornerstone is the only basis for three securities. He is a stone very strong and everlasting. He is a tried stone tested and fit to be the foundation. He is a precious corner stone very costly one and it can support the entire structure of the building. He is a sure and strong foundation, solid and immovable.
- 4) The Lord's cornerstone is the true standard of measurement. Those who trust in Him will go into the Messianic kingdom and they will be never taken away by God's judgment Justice and righteousness.

These are the salient and central attributes to Messianic kingdom. Gods coming judgment will sweep away (like violent tempest) and overflow (like a raging flood) anyone who is not resting on Gods cornerstone. This cornerstone prophecy is found in "Hallel" psalms (psalms 113-118). 'Hallel' is the Hebrew word for "praise" and describes this group of praise psalms. The psalmist prophesied. "The stone which the builders refused has become it corner stone of the corner (psalm 118:22). People sang this memorable Messene psalm when he entered Jerusalem temple. "Save now" (Hosanna) blessed be he (son of David, messiah king of Israel) cometh in the name of the Lord.

This particular psalm was prophesied said that Messiah could be rejected first by the believers (Israel's religions leaders) but in future. He would become the cornerstone. This piece of information reflects two aspects of the Messianic Mission. They are rejection and exaltation. As mentioned in the prophecy God is making people to become in that manner. The Messiah was rejected by the people in his first coming so that he could become God's 'sin' offering. And the result of that was he could be called and became headstone of the corner. And then in his second coming. He would rule forever by sitting on David's throne.

Jesus after His second coming would become the cornerstone upon which the entire Messianic kingdom shall be built Jesus was bluntly rejected in His first coming accordingly to the Hebrew prophet people at that time thought that the Messiah as a cornerstone and king would provide them political deliverance from the roman rule. They did not understand that he came only for spiritual

deliverance. After His second coming He will establish His kingdom in future. Then the believers will shout this is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it” (psalms 118:24).

This present situation is the climate of human history as the messiah might arrive at any moment. He will bring His eternal kingdom; of justice and righteousness the believers have the rejected stone as the corner stone. They will cry from the temple “save us now” blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord”. (Psalms 118:25-26).

The Hebrew prophets also prophesied that all people will not enter the kingdom of the Messiah. The redeemer will come to Zion and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob. The measuring line of justice of God and plumb line of righteousness are completely based upon the cornerstone. Therefore, those who trust in Him the cornerstone shall be his sanctuary but to those who reject Him, the cornerstone will be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. The wicked will stumble and fall with broken heart. And what apostle peter testified about Jesus in the following words is most appropriate “this is the stone...we must be saved” (Acts 1:11-12) the conclusion is that salvation is found only in the Lords cornerstone”.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PSALM 23

The women of Israel were in the habit of coming out of their houses and welcome the soldiers whenever they came victorious from the battle field. They got such occasion during the reign of king Saul. They commented at that time that Saul hath slain thousands and David his ten thousands (1 Samuel 18:7). It is undoubtedly an exaggeration or hyperbol about David as a warrior at that time. Anyway the comment of those women hit hard at the ego or pride of king Saul. And by that time David as a shepherd boy already killed a giant of philistines whose height was about 9 feet 6 inches, with the help of a sling and pebble. This incident particularly added fear in the mind of king Saul.

In his early days, David was appointed as a musician in the palace of king Saul to provide him music whenever he was in restless condition. The courageous nature and wonderful music gave a good impression upon king Saul and at one stage he even thought of giving his daughter in marriage to young and handsome David. At the same time, Saul felt jealous of David for his courage and even afraid of him. He was planning to kill David. If not he might cause some problem to his throne. David understood the crooked nature of the king. He thought it was not safe for him to remain in the palace. With that decision David fled from the presence of the king and his soldiers to the springs at “En Gedi” wilderness for his safety. According to historical information this place is also called Judean wilderness, which is near the “Dead Sea” and “Cumran caves.” It is a place with beautiful oasis and springs of fresh water and a number of caves for the people to hide. In that place David could have plenty of food fresh water and caves to hide himself from the danger of kind Saul.

Even then the king somehow came to know the whereabouts of David and planned to go to “En Gedi” to attack and kill David. He went to the place with 3000 soldiers with their shields swords and helmets. There is no doubt David selected a very good place for his security. It is really impossible for anybody to locate him but he would be able to find any enemy from his hiding place. The

soldiers started searching for him in the bushes. But, he knew fully well if the soldiers found him to his bad luck that is an end of him. At that moment, anybody would have understood David by looking at his pathetic face.

In such helpless conditions David happened to look down at the slopes. He saw a flock of sheep peacefully grazing and the shepherd was watching his sheep as a protector. This incident of sheep and shepherd changed his attitude. If anybody looked at his face at that time would have found that sudden change in him. There was no more fear in him. Now, he became so courageous to face any kind of danger or untoward occurrence as he already decided in his mind. Even a glimmer of smile could be seen in his rugged handsome face. It came to his mind for awhile the yesteryears experiences as a shepherd boy how he shepherded his fathers sheep and his faithfulness towards his family members as a last son and his faithfulness towards the innocent sheep.

The picture of shepherd and sheep gave him indelible impression. He began to speak something and words came to him spontaneously and almost effortlessly. They came from his inner core of his heart. They came as if he was whispering with someone. He was surprised himself at his own sudden change and finally said, “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” (Psalm 23:1). If any city dweller or educated one gets this kind of wise thought we could not have felt much about it. But, a shepherd like David getting divine expression we cannot but appreciate him because God was with him and God was speaking through him.

As a matter of fact, he knew all about the sheep. He knew all about a faithful shepherd how he should be. At that time, how much discouragement he must have felt at one stage one can understand. The Bible did not give any special significance to the 23 chapter of Psalms. But the situation under which David remained in “En gedi” wilderness must have prompted him to speak such words with the God’s Holy Spirit. Because of the inner meaning and its importance every Bible reader and even Sunday school kids will certainly get this 23 chapter recited. It is as important as Lord’s prayer. So we can consider this most important of all Psalms. Actually, this chapter in the Bible starts with a

surprising and affirmative expression “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” It is an expression of great meaning and profound thought. On one hand we say Lord is my shepherd and on the other we say we are the shepherd’s sheep. In this wonderful compliment if the first one is true automatically the second part is also true. Both are interlinked with their meaning. If you say the Lord is my shepherd this saying clearly indicates that you are completely dependent on the shepherd for anything and everything.

The sheep symbolizes innocence and helplessness and it appears to be a dependent on others. Even Jesus Christ was called the Lamb of God the sacrificial lamb for the sins of the world. As an harmless creature it cannot bite anybody or any other animal. It cannot run fast at the time of any danger like other animals. It cannot make holes like a some other animals. It does not have venom with which it can poison the body of other animals or human beings who tried to harm it. It has no horns to buck. Therefore, the animal sheep is not only defenseless but also a dumb creature. It does not know when it shall be killed. It always depends upon its master the shepherd for its survival.

So the moment a person acknowledges the Lord as his shepherd he must also acknowledge his own frailty and his dependence on the shepherd. Once we accept God as our shepherd there is no scope for any ego or self pride in us because we are completely depending upon God. The Psalm continues with confidence and assurance. “I shall not want” these four words speak about the truth of the opening statement of Psalms. If a man or a woman says these words the Lord is my shepherd and I am his sheep then it must be said I shall not want anything. Such a person can have an absolute and perfect provision from God and with that gift either he or she can live the rest of life in peace and harmony. There is a promise from our everlasting father God that He would provide all necessary things to His children.

If we go on looking into this analogy of shepherd and sheep continuously the remaining part of the psalm is nothing but a commentary on the glorious truth that is the Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want. “He maketh me to lie down in green postures” – in these words we find how God as a shepherd



directing His sheep. The nation of Israel has been landscaped by the creator with almost endless hills and valleys surrounded by lush green fields and at the same time with barren lands. The sheep while grazing at the fertile lands and if the shepherd happened to neglect his watch then there is every possibility of the sheep to slip into the adjacent desert land and finally die without grass to eat and water.

The wise shepherd thinks it necessary to make his sheep lie down only in the grassy fields so that they can be safe and secure. In that green pastures the sheep would naturally find the chances of survival and good strength to their life's journey. In the same way many times the child of God wanders aimlessly in the barren deserts of this material world by forgetting its master only to experience suffering and at last die helplessly. This kind of experiences are a setback to our faithful shepherd. He wants that His sheep should lie always in green pastures only so that they can be happy and healthy. The shepherd knows what He should do to His sheep as a true master. He leadeth me beside the still waters – these words show how God wants to protect His sheep from all difficulties. The sheep is a poor swimmer and cannot protect itself from the danger of fast moving water. The narrow ravines of Israel nation would become torrential during the spring season. In such condition if the innocent sheep are allowed to go to the rapid current of water to quench their thirst they may be caught up in that flow of water and while going with water desperately they may dash against a rock or carry down to the lower part of the stream. A wise shepherd who takes care of his sheep will try to find out the rocks that block the flow of water to some extent and also the places of stagnated water for his sheep. They drink that water peacefully without any disturbance. In the same way sometimes we as children of God are attacked by the fast moving things and pleasures in this world like fast moving water with no awareness of hidden rocks that try to block our progress by the treacherous current of water. But our shepherd (God) will take us to the safe side of still water and guide us to drink fresh water at such calm places. The water that the Lord gives us is life sustaining and He alone can provide that kind of life saving water to His children.

“He restoreth my soul” – David can be called the versatile genius among the Biblical writers like Moses of the old testament apostles of the new testament. He was a shepherd, a poet, a king and a wonderful musician. He was also called a sweet Psalmist among Israelites. He knew from his personal experience that the sheep used to be anxious and fearful. They can even sense the approaching danger. At times, the shepherd may have to sing some songs or produce some music with some instrument as Amos prophet did for his sheep. We have some shepherds in the Bible who came to lime light in their life time. They even became great prophets. Among such shepherds the first one was ofcourse Mechezidic grandson of Canaan and the great grandson of Noah. He was the first high priest who later became king of Salem (Geniuses 14:18). He was the founder of the present Jerusalem and it was he who named the land of milk and honey as Canaan. The next shepherd was Moses who became the servant of God and led the Israelites from the bondage in Egypt to the promised land of Canaan for forty years. The third person was David who rose himself from the stage of shepherd to the stage of king of Israelites.

The next one was “Amos” a rustic shepherd and God used him by sending to “Bethel” to set right the ungrateful and wicked Israelites. The shepherd gives comfort and restores the perturbed souls of the sheep whenever they are in danger. Along with the voice of God it is good to have the light of day and in the same way it is wonderful to hear music in the night. “He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name sake” we can find in these words the divine reputation. It is good to know that every shepherd had a positive reputation and he must defend that under all conditions and David knew about that better than many other shepherds regarding good reputation. As a shepherd boy David happened to protect his sheep on two occasions. The first one was when a lion attacked his sheep and secondly when a bear attacked them (1 Samuel 17 : 34 – 36). If the shepherd would not use his wisdom to protect his sheep at the time of danger they might be perished automatically. And the other shepherds would not take the risk of asking that kind of careless shepherd to take care of their sheep. So a good shepherd would have a good reputation and even the sheep

would remember him. For that reason in the context of a shepherd and sheep the Lord declared, “And I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” and again “I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:28 and 10:10)

If we think about this deeply and if we find any sheep perished in the past centuries it was only a total failure on the part of a shepherd. In such positions the other shepherds would not entrust their sheep to his care. But our Almighty God leads His sheep in the path of righteousness for the sake of His name. And His reputation is on the point of increase from time to time what a wonderful comfort God could give to the troubled souls? When they were in calamities. So a true shepherd should be always alert with the presence of mind even in the troubled and dangerous places for the sake of his innocent sheep. “Yea though I walk through the valley of shadow of death I will fear no evil thou art with me.” We find calmness and confidence in the midst of storm. In this context those words do not speak of death as some other writers might suggest commonly. Any writer who writes with divine inspiration or with Holy Spirit does not point out death till he reaches the last part of the Psalm. But the story of sheep and shepherd is continued with their description. The meaning of the shadow of death is literally the valley of deep darkness. It is a narrow deep ravine through which the sheep has to pass. It is no doubt a place of great danger.

If the sheep cannot move in the narrow plains with more care there is every possibility of being attacked by any wild animal. But David in spite of his anticipating danger for his sheep from wild animals. “He said I will fear no evil.” There is good reason for David to feel comforted even in such risky situation. Thy rod and thy staff they comforted me – in these words we find strong protection. If any wild animal by chance attacks the sheep the faithful shepherd even at the cost of his life will try to protect them. The shepherd will have a long and strong stick in his hand to guard the sheep. That is the only weapon by which he will have to protect his sheep. Even the young shepherd Melchizedic

who later became the high priest had his shepherd stick with him for some years and gave that stick to Abraham when he met him while returning from the battle field. If any sheep has fallen in a ditch by mistake he will try all means to get it out of the place. “Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.” Generally deep valleys filled with trees and thick bushes are dangerous to the sheep because some wild animals will hide in such places to catch their prey. Therefore, slope valleys with bushes and big rocks are always dangerous to innocent sheep. And also the shepherd should cast an eye on such places for the sake of his sheep. The shepherd uses some language to call his sheep and they would understand the language and the master. The sheep can know their master by listening to his tone and follow him.

While the sheep is enjoying in grazing and drinking water the shepherd will be watching them from a distance. If any sheep is missing or lagging behind due to sickness or wound the shepherd would leave the entire flock and go in search of the missed one and when he finds it he will carry it on his shoulders happily. That is the real love and affection of the shepherd towards his sheep. By keeping this example in our minds let us question ourselves as how many of us could have the gift of spiritual experience from our Lord God and shepherd Jesus Christ inspite of hindrances or hardships in our day to day life.

“Thou anointest my head with oil” this is the reference of the balm of Gelead (Jeremiah 8:22). The shepherds often carry a cruse of oil as a healing agent. If any sheep is wounded by means of rocks or wild animals immediately the shepherd will use that oil and the wound as first aid and provide some relief to them. The oil works on the wounds of the animals like a medicine and emergency substitute. So to say the shepherd also acts as emergency doctor to his sheep. In the same manner our God also at times heals His sheep with the Holy Spirit. In this reference David reflects on God’s wonderful provision and so he proclaims “My cup runneth over” – here we see how David accepted the abundant gift of life provided by God the life saving water given by Him. In his Israel nation there are only three sources of water. They are a Cistern, a well and running water that flows from a narrow gully or stream bed which fills water

within the rainy season but remains dry at other times and during the dry season the shepherds had to go with their sheep to a nearby well and draw water and fill the buckets with that water. When the sheep dip their heads in the water it overflows the containers. The picture appears to be an imaginary intended by God in His statement “I am come that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10)

The Psalmist clearly pointed out who complained anything about life. He said “In all the days of my life security goodness and mercy shall flow all the days of my life” – in these words we find unlimited blessings from God – whenever we read these words it appears as if these elves are following us behind. They are security goodness and mercy. According to the meaning of the Psalmist David there is no doubt in both God’s goodness and mercy. He said, “They will follow me all the days of my life” as David wished. He wrote “as per the statement there is no promise of an easy life power, fame, name, wealth, etc.” But above all there is something greater than the above said things and that is the presence of “God’s goodness and God’s mercy.” And we wish these gifts must continue throughout our life. As far as our life is concerned there are no other gifts more valuable than “God’s goodness and God’s mercy” towards us. David now turned to think about eternal life – and I dwell in the house of the Lord forever. We find in these words the acknowledgement of eternal life and also the reference of death.

The Lord is my shepherd – I shall not want – I am his sheep – in this life His goodness and mercy shall follow me and in the life to come I shall live in God’s house forever. In this context we can find the abundant faith of David on God and his confidence regarding the next life. In this connection, I would like to mention a wonderful story of a village boy. A teenage boy one day left his house from a small village in Scotland. He went in search of some livelihood and finally stood on his own legs for his future life as an actor. Luck was in his favor and God blessed him. Within a few years he became a topmost actor of the dramas of the world famous dramatist William Shakespeare. And he reached the pinnacle as an actor. After he became very popular as an actor of Shakespearian dramas he wished to visit his native village to see his relatives and friends with

the status of a famous actor. His visiting of that insignificant village is a memorable experience to the villagers and more exciting to his community. The villagers even felt proud of themselves because that small village could produce the famous actor. So in memory of his name and fame a grand party was arranged. They enjoyed the party to their hearts content.

Then he prayed to God in gratitude he recollected his past life in that village. While doing so somebody came from the gathering and made a proposal that a contest must be conducted. It is also proposed that the contestants would be only two the famous actor and local pastor. The importance of the contest is that both the participants have to quote some lines from the dramas of Shakespeare. The elder pastor expressed his inability and said that he did not remember anything of William Shakespeare. But added he would remember still the 23 chapter of Psalms that he read when he was attending Sunday school classes as a boy even long before the honored guest memorized that while attending the Sunday school classes. And finally it was decided both should recite the Psalm 23<sup>rd</sup> chapter.

The elder pastor started first and very slowly he recited the Psalm. The audience listened to him attentively and nodded their heads in the acceptance. Next was the actors turn. The honored guest quoted the entire Psalm with good expression, perfect gesture masterful inflection and flawless diction because he was a famous actor. He finished his recitation. There was a pin drop silence for a while then everybody from the gathering praised the perfectness of the actor. Then as a result of the commentary of the audience the actor went to the podium with bowing head and humility. He proclaimed his announcement by addressing the audience in the following manner. Ladies and gentlemen “I know the Psalm but the pastor knows the shepherd.” In the present days millions of people can quote completely or at least partially. But undoubtedly very few know the shepherd (God) because most of us are not faithful and righteous. Without faith and righteousness we can never think about our eternal life so, let us say at this moment, these words “The Lord is my shepherd – I am His sheep – I shall not want anymore either in this life or in life to come.”

## THE CHURCH HISTORY OF THE FIRST SIXTEEN CENTURIES

One may be curious to know the long and complicated story of the church, how it survived with the scripture for sixteen centuries.

In this context we have to understand the early challenges to scripture, with an appeal to scripture and tradition. The church remained close with the Christian community during the second and third centuries. The scripture also sustained the church, with prayers and holiness.

It enabled the early Christians to give proper response to all questions and other attacks, time and again.

Scripture remained relevant, as important sermons and commentaries based on scripture, expanded the heart of normal theological life of the church in the early centuries. If we study about the early church as the scripture reading community, we can correctly understand what the early church and Christianity was all about. To think about the scripture was like an appeal to a structural and detailed study of what may be called the renewed study of Jewish view of God, the world and the humankind.

This can be undoubtedly demonstrated in many detailed statements. To say with broad outlook, the claim is to be rooted in Israel's story and recreation through the death and resurrection of Israel's Messiah. The claim of some writers, their scriptural basis and appeal led to the emphasis on the historical nature of the church. And more stress was put on the continuity from Jesus to their own and the continuity of the people of Abraham, transformed through Jesus the Messiah, but still obedient to the same world transforming call.

But recent writings have claimed fresh ideas of familiar challenges. Some recent efforts have been made to discover alternative models of early Christianity and suggest that other texts were excluded from the mainstream. The nature of early Christian living came from the late protestant church, then an apparent

early catholic position and partly from late modern eagerness from religions of self-discovery against that of redemption.

People sometimes suggest that the process of canonization is the sign the church itself was the final authority.

This proposal was made sometime back by Catholics who followed the tradition and claimed supremacy over the Bible from early days, sometimes by post modern scripture asserting that the canon itself and the books included in it were all part of a power play for control within the church and social responsibility in the world. Those who transmit, collect and distribute were not in the same league as those who write it in the first place.

Such proposals appear to be not important to remember them historically despite the enthusiastic adversary in some quarters. All such things represent themselves in other forms. The canonization of the scripture, both Jewish and Christian, was made more complicated by less than perfectness of man. In respect to canonization, it was never simply a matter of choice of particular books on “who is in” and “who is out” basis. It is certainly a long process, a matter of setting out a larger story, a narrative framework that makes sense, and brings order to God’s world and people.

All of us should remember one important thing in this context. As a matter of understanding the early history about the Bible, reading church members were burnt alive, thrown to the lions, persecuted or tortured and killed. Readers of the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul etc may find in them, a kind of spirituality generated by people like Thomas. Similar books did not worry the Roman imperial authorities. Sometimes it is said that the canonical books unlike those found in other collections, were written as a way of making early Christians more respectable, socially and culturally.

“Irenaeus” returned to “Lyons” as bishop after his predecessor had been martyred along with many other Christians in 177AD. But this new bishop became a staunch opponent of the theology found in “Thomas”. His writings were abundantly clear. It was canonical scripture that sustained the early church in its



energetic mission and its commitments that surprised the alert pagan world to radical holiness.

As time passed, it became difficult to control and maintain Jewish churches on spiritual matters. After a few centuries, the loss of Israel's importance in the understanding of churches and scripture and the men of spiritual authority, all became detached from the narrative context and completely isolated from the gift and goal of the kingdom. During that critical period, many theologians like Augustine remained passionately committed to God's work. They tried their best to bring people to faith, to holiness and to salvation.

At the same time, we miss some of the developing traditions, the dynamic notions of scripture as the vehicle of God's kingdom coming to birth in the world. God is at work powerfully through scripture about His kingdom by calling and shaping a covenant people by making, some of them even good teachers and preachers. The most prominent aspect of the scripture is, it came to be regarded as a "Court of appeal" - the source book or book of rules from which doctrines or ethics" might be deducted for "Lectio Divina," the presence in which individual readers could hear God personally speak to them, and nourish their own spirituality and devotion.

If we study carefully what happened during the third century AD, some theologians like "Origen" preferred "allegory" as the proper means of understanding the Bible. But to our surprise this allegory was already in use as a weapon in writing during the first century by a Jewish philosopher and a statesman "Phillo" who lived in Alexandria, similar to Origen. The meaning of "allegory" is "at its heart reveals the surface text as a code through which the hidden meaning may be discerned". And it appears to be partly used in some of the parables of Jesus Christ.

The apocalyptic incidents in "Daniel" and some other books of the Old Testament, explained allegorically within the text themselves. Apostle Paul used some allegorical statements of the Old Testament in books like Galatians 4:21-31. We can also find allegory in 1 Peter 3:20-22.

The best-known example of subsequent allegorical reading of the scripture is the spectacular, erotic love poem we all know as “the song of songs”. There is an allegory of love between Christ and the church in parallel with Jewish reading about the love between “Yahweh” and Israel.

So far we have studied some highlights of the allegorical expressions and notable incidents from the scripture, primarily the Old Testament. And some problematic issues were also explained from the scripture. There are some shocking stories with allegory from the Old Testament.

Then regarding the New Testament and the allegorical writers, we have to support them because they followed the footprints of the contemporary writers in every point of view. But it appears they were not aware the Bible contained and was flooded with more examples and dogmatic teachings.

Some writers did not realize that scripture offered many instances of the wickedness of human beings. In this context we can bring to our minds how God dealt with the stiff necked and stone hearted Israel in the wilderness by the wanderings for forty remarkable years.

One such example is Judah’s conviction of incest with Tamar (Genesis38) and the arrogant behavior in his proposal to sell Joseph into slavery,as well as his humble submission to remain as a slave to Joseph in place of Benjamin when Joseph was in a high position under the Pharaoh. Joseph was sold as a slave but God was with him and blessed him abundantly at every stage. He finally entered the royal palace and occupied the highest position next to Pharaoh in Egypt.

We have another pathetic story of the Levite’s concubine (Judges19), which was not intended to teach morals to the readers. It was only the writers repeated argument regarding the terrible life people lived at that time. We may find many more examples of that kind. The adulterous life of King David with Bathsheba then the inhuman rape of Tamar by Ammon King’s son (2 Samuel 13) and then Absalom’s rebellion and David’s disgrace are noteworthy.

The above-mentioned stories that contain some morality, hardly improve the moral standards of the Bible readers because they are not cozy. But still such stories need not be read allegorically due to their powerful theological point. And in the second grade level, the writers of allegory did not show any interest to depict anymore characters from the Bible. There are a few more instances to understand the ways in which the Christian reading of the Old Testament that involved both community and dis-community.

Allegory would claim in one sense, as the way of “saving the Bible for the church,” which means it must be other readings of the strategies at that time as passages with low taste, which might be found in the Old Testament. And the allegorical readers always conducted their exegies within the framework of the early Christian’s rule of faith. It also gave their thinking, a Christian narrative shape. But this allegorical exegies always ran the risk of concluding a great deal, in a more fundamental level by encouraging people to see the Bible in a distorted way. At this point we can understand that allegory was one symptom of a move away from the scriptural narrative itself. But it was not the way of saying that one has to believe every single incident or point in the scripture in order to be saved.

As a matter of fact it provided a state of limitations that, only scripture is to be taught as nothing to believe, to be saved from sin. On the other hand it gave basic support, as a great truth was taught from the scripture, which was the way of salvation. Those people, who were entrusted the work of teaching in the church, have no right to use the office to teach anything else.

Then, in course of time, some reformers came forward and set the scripture against traditions of the church. Apart from that, the lush growth of other three senses and the right of ordinary Christians to read scripture for their own self, was partly disturbed because of the protection of the sacred text by the Latin reading elite. They did so, because the church had gotten away from the right track, and the living God has been trying to get the scripture, back into His fold.

As a matter of fact, our scripture was not just a resource to be brought into, or to knock down a particular idea from it. It was explained faithfully with due attention paid to the central New Testament, with more emphasis on the Cross and Resurrection of Christ. This eventually became a turning point in all history, and happened only once, never to repeat to each mass. We must believe whole-heartedly, that God's word would work in us afresh again and again in our minds and hearts. It is appropriate to mention two great reformers, namely Martin Luther of Germany and William Tyndale of England. Both of them exercised everlasting influence and won the flood of popularity not only from the Christian world for their achievements, but also from their own language speaking people in subsequent centuries.

The reformers tried to regard non-Biblical traditions as a separate authoritative source, and quoted some passages, (Mark 7:8), where Christ happened to castigate the 'Scribes' and 'Pharisees for placing human tradition against "Divine command".

Those people regularly opposed the church "fathers", and demonstrated their own interpretations. Some of the reformers like John Calvin were originally outstanding commentators who pleaded against the subtle and fanciful readings generated from within the worldview as that of the medieval church. But the reformers never advanced beyond their limits in the polarization of scripture and traditions.

Then, the council of "Trent" called by Rome to answer the reformers charges and proposals, wanted to work on the question on scripture and traditions. And this remained as a part of Roman Catholic doctrine and catechizes to this day. In such atmosphere the second Vatican council four hundred years later, seized the scripture and tradition flow from the same Divine wellspring, to merge into a unity and move towards the same goal. We are in fact using the same word, and the authority has changed its meaning in the present day society. So if we refer such matters to the authority for justice, for both the reformers and opponents, there may not be possibility of proper justice.

It appears that we may find something vital when we study about reformers and scripture. While they were discussing details in the scripture, they paid little attention towards the narration of God, Israel, Jesus. The world was coming forward into our own day and looking ahead to the eventual renewal of all things. It may be true. Their insistence on the once and for all, the name of Jesus Christ and his sacrificial death are rooted in what we call today a sense of “eschatology”. Reformers do not appear to have gone very far towards allowing this genuinely Biblical insight to work its way.

For example, reading of the gospel by them showed little awareness of anything other than that of dominical teaching with the saving events of ‘Good Friday’ and ‘Easter’, but without integrating such events into the kingdom proclamation that followed them. The most important point we have to understand with a glance here in the sixteenth century, is that the reformers were insisting on the authority of scripture, which made many important points but left many more things to public for discussion.

If the reformers were to come and address us today, they would not say that we understand it. According to them, we must follow their exegies, theology and implement it precisely as it stands, but they would say we must follow their method, read and study scripture for its worth. And the scripture would work in the minds of people in the churches. They would not be surprised at all as we come up with certain issues and theological and practical purposes and proposals. They would rather encourage us whole heartedly to go back where scripture led, using all the tools available to us being prepared and challenged by all human traditions including reformation traditions themselves, because we must say the scripture encouraged us to do so like that.

If we are asked to be careful about the use of the word “literal”, and if we move back from modern period to the sixteenth century, it is the same as true if not truer, including the words “reason” and “rationalism”. Those words have actually a complicated history that which we cannot examine for the present. But there are some controversies when reasons failed in the sixteenth century and continued to rumble, and affect the way in which people discuss authority in our times.

At the end of second century, Tertullian once asked the concerned authorities what has “Athens to do with Jerusalem?” or what has unaided philosophical reason to do with the revelation of God in Jesus Christ?”

“Thomas Aquinas” established great synthesis along with the theology of “high middle ages”. Different scholars continued their debates regarding belief in certain things including the existence of God, which anybody could know or understand with unaided human reason. People could know by themselves about God and other things with out any benefits of special revelation given in scripture and tradition. But all those things remained as enormously important to Thomas Aquinas.

A question was put here again how much people could know without special revelation, burnt into flames again in the early reformation, with Martin Luther angrily confirming “Erasmus” regarding whether human beings would have understanding capacity of grasping the gospels.

The parallel was between the reformation doctrine of justification by faith, and the knowledge of God through special revelation, rather than nature. Human capacity continued to be more important at different levels. But the question was not at all positively resolved in the first generation of reformation.

In England particularly, human nature became worse. It caused headache and gave scope for more controversies during the first half of the century. The puritan movement was also at its peak during that time which wanted to bring some kind of Calvinism into England. At the same time it has been argued amicably by the people at Scotland that scripture alone has complete authority to implement the customs and ceremonies into the minds of people of church and tradition.

Another well noted man, Richard Hooker, (1554-1600 AD), expounded a theory, which strongly emphasized the basic reformation doctrines such as justification by faith, which looked back in other ways to Aquinas, and holistic medieval world-view. He was of the opinion that all reality would be governed by natural law. He saw the puritans were following a single agenda. He advocated

that human society would change and develop from time to time and the church would also provide great help to the human society. Many methods had been introduced by the governing church at that time and one of those might be changed and developed as well.

Hooker, in his argument insisted on reason, and said it was not the way of understanding the scripture. Then the community itself was based on scripture, which could have wonderful and suitable history behind it. After gaining good experience, the community knowingly or unknowingly could never commit any blunder and move forward, as if it was in the dark, but with confidence, hope, and faith marched ahead with the light of the Son of God. All these salient points are given to the society and to the church by our scripture in harmony with natural law that came from the creator Almighty God in the first place.

There are many ironic expressions in the reformation. And it was the puritan emphasis on the right of individual interpretations of scripture, which paved the way regarding the elements of Godly devotion. But it was removed along with highhanded ecclesial authority.

Due to that rational thinking among churchgoers from eighteenth century onwards it was insisted that one should be the master of one's own fate and the captain of one's own soul. He could be guided by human reason alone and finally cut loose from the teachings of scripture and church.

However, Hooker must have been shocked at the information and for him "reason" was part of total natural order, which paved the way towards God, who revealed Himself in Jesus Christ completely. Whoever goes through the information given above would certainly come to a conclusion that the following famous reformers like Martin Luther, Richard Hooker and Thomas Aquinas made wonderful changes for the betterment of the church through scripture and society during their life time.

## REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY

Teaching in churches, it seems replaced Israel and therefore there is no future for them according to prophecy. And some scholars called this replacement theology. After the ministry of Jesus Christ and resurrection, the apostles presented the Gospel messages in the first century at different places. But the teachings of Jesus Christ and the messages of apostles were bluntly refused by both Jews and Israelites. Then God become angry and allowed Jerusalem to be attacked and destroyed by the Roman emperors is 70 AD(Titus) and again in 134 AD by Hadrian.

At last Israel was finished without any recognition or importance. The prophecies that spoke about Israel were yet to be fulfilled. According to replacement theology, God does not show any interest in preserving the nation of Israel and about their future. It appears God is willing to show greater interest toward the people of other nations. It is not clearly indicated whether Jewish people can believe in Christ and be saved as individuals. But one thing is clearly pointed out by some commentators that there is no future salvation to Jews and Israelites. Therefore, all these prophecies about the Jews speak about church only and they will be fulfilled in the church itself. So, this replacement theology has its own positive results.

Basing on this information “Lorraine Boettner” in his widely read seminaries book advocating post millennialism after thousand years that Christ will return ceremoniously to receive His kingdom, after conversion of the whole world and its thousand years piety . But the Jews no longer occupy a place of special favour in the divine plan. That does not mean God has cast them out of His sight. Nothing has taken away from the Jews as individuals. It seems only the external forms have been abolished from them.

And the Jews at the same time, forfeited the rights as a chosen nation or to be more clear after God had completed. His purpose with the Jews as a separate race, they would be continued to have the privileges of full and free salvation



individually. If we study carefully Loraine Boettner and about some other free thinkers who were in the same line of thinking coincided in the same type of opinions explained that the Jews individually or from any group or nation, one day or other can except Christ as their personal savior and become part of the universal church.

Even then all of them have negative opinion regarding the re gathering of the Jews. In the year 1948, May 8th, the formation of independent Israel Nation came in to being by the British government. If we look into the recent established Israel nation it appeared to have highhanded nation toward the Arab population, who have been trying to expand their kingdom further into the surrounding regions. Those Jews were not at all giving any moral or legal support to the neighboring countries like Palestine than any other country in the world.

But, it seems the author of replacement theology Dr.Gary.Y.Cohen was not happy at the comment of Loraine Bortner regarding Jewish people. He said Boettner did not know much about the political conditions of Israel, during the last fifty years. The League of Nations voted in favour of separate states for both Israel and Palestine. At the same time west Bank was given to Jordan. Soon after that partition, Israel tried to re establish itself. But immediately after the partition the neighboring Arab nations like, Egypt, Syria, Jordan and some other countries jointly attacked Israel. Their main purpose was to destroy that country, kill all people and wipe out the nation from the world map.

In 1967 again, the same Egypt, Syria and Jordan attacked Israel with the same intention, according to the writer, Boettner perhaps did not remember all these important issues. The third time Egypt and Syria attacked Israel and this time it was saved providentially by God. Keeping all these things in our minds we can come to a conclusion that the impression of Boettner and his saying about Israel, as they were ruthlessly displeased an Arab population seems to be far from truth.

It was more surprising that Turkey also a non- Arab ruled country kept Palestine under its control from the time of crusaders, that is 12th and 13th

centuries till the 1st world war. The word crusade was derived from “cross”. During 1150 to 1914, the Muslim Seljuk Turks and then Ottoman Turks ruled for about 400 years, and owned Palestine completely under their control, until they were driven out by the British Military General “Allembey” at the time of the 1st world war. The Turks slaughtered many people as they were leaving Palestine and never to return nor claim the land.

So, there was a beautiful saying among people in those days which became very popular. It was like this, the first world war left the land without people and the second world war left people without land. And these people displaced the European Jews also. We can presume at that time God’s providence was at work and it had been providing the necessary help to the Jews because they were His chosen people. In this context let us consider the valuable contribution made by two stalwarts named Augustine and Martin Luther.

Augustine: Augustine was called hero of Christian faith. But Dr. Gary Y. Cohen was not happy with the remarks made by Augustine about Israel. He might have made the remarks against Israel basing on the period in which he lived. He was very famous for his Biblical and historical information. To know the full details of the historical events mentioned by him, we must go back to the fourth century. Both Augustine and Martin Luther were the heroes of Christian faith. Augustine was undoubtedly correct in his statement about Israel because his impressions might have been attributed to the period in which he lived.

Augustine was the Bishop of Hippo in North Africa in the fifth century. He was considered to be the greatest Christian after the apostles for first five centuries and his writings appeared as the seminal ideas of Christian theology. When Romans were in full control of their empire about three hundred years back from the time of Jesus Christ they happened to drive away many Jews out of Jerusalem into the remote parts of their kingdom apart from killing many. Only a remnant of them remained in entire Israel. Augustine felt very much for that condition and said even that limited number of Jews could not accept Jesus as their Messiah.

So, according to him, the time of Jews as the chosen people of God came to an end. As they were set aside, the next chosen people of God shall be the Christians. That was his opinion. It was the time of violent political upheavals, and no one was dare enough to talk about this small country Israel. At the same time Christian church was debating Trinitarian and Christological means, heresies eschatology of the study of last things not any body's understanding. There is some truth in the remarks of Augustine, when he said, Christians who believed in Christ are the real Christians of God, who redeemed them. The Jews who believed in Christ in one or two generations, would lose their identity as Jews, and they too become the members of the universal church. And this change would no way hinder the eternal promises of God toward Israel.

Martin Luther – Protestant Reformation : He was called hero of Protestant Reformation and the basic Biblical doctrine of “justification by faith”. His period was (1483 – 1546). In the beginning he showed some favour to the Jews, but as time went on, he became impatient toward them for their peculiar behavior and finally turned against them. Martin Luther some how exhibited his hostility toward Jews in his writings. But Gary Cohen felt very much for the remarks of Martin Luther against Jews and said Luther was left to the judgment of God for writing something against God's people, the Jews.

If we look into the history, we never come across a single protestant Christian just one thousand years back in the world. And if we read some of the letters, we will certainly admire him for his love, kind heart and for his brilliant approach. Above all he was a true Christian. During his time, the Barbarians attacked the Roman empire, which was in its down fall at that time. And Christianity was also at its waning condition. But it so happened providentially many of the Germaine and Slavonic tribes under the sound of Gospel became Christians.

Luther was undoubtedly an outspoken man. He was very courageous while talking about important issues. If we look into the commentary on ‘Galatians’ we can understand the basic Biblical doctrine of justification by faith.

His courage, and outspokenness could be found in his launching of Protestant Reformation. And what he spoke in his time became today a basis for modern Evangelism. We must remember how his brilliant Biblical teachings about salvation brought a large “Crowd” to “Wittenberg” in his time. This was a wonderful mobilization and finally paved the way to launch Protestant Reformation.

Luther believed his Biblical teachings might convert at least some Jews into his fold. But his plan worked adversely. So he became impatient and turned against the Jews. He finally rattled against the Pope and his sacraments. He even attacked the Catholic Church with his ninety five doctrines, which he nailed them to the church door. Even today every year October 31st is considered and observed as Martin Luther’s day among the Lutheran churches.

Whether he was right or wrong in his attacking Catholics or Jews, he was accountable before the judgment of God. His comments or words became ammunition to those people who hated Jews like himself. Luther actually tried to be amicable with the Jews but it was misfired. That’s why he became wild and turned against them.

What he spoke about Jews was like Proto Nazi. His comments appeared to be better than as part of a tradition of medieval Christian and Semitism had social and cultural basis for modern (anti-Semitism) which is based on Pseudo – scientific ideas concerning the race. These notions of race compelled Adolf Hitler the dictator of Germany during the second world war, who imprisoned and killed finally Six Million Jews (sixty lakhs) brutally.

During the first two centuries many Jews opposed Christianity as they opposed Gentiles. It was quite contrary to the prophetic scripture and vehemently pointed out the Bible readers. Those who opposed the prophetic scripture had an impression that God had totally and finally rejected all the Jews and Israel forever.

Apostle Paul started his first Missionary journey to Antioch in Presidia in Turkey and preached in synagogues. The people who attended the meeting

partly accepted Jesus as their savior and some others rejected Him. His wonderful preaching made the congregation into groups. Then majority of Jews and some other religious leaders followed Paul and Barnabas. They wholeheartedly encouraged both of them to continue their preaching in the grace of God. The response for Paul's meeting was amazing on the next Sabbath day, and all enjoyed well that day's preaching to their hearts content. Paul mobilized the entire city.

Even then there were some Jews who did not like Jesus. Those people felt jealous of that huge gathering and spoke ill of them. Some Christian churches in china, Africa and some other parts of the world, thought that the entire world be converted into Christianity at the end of Nineteenth Century. Probably there would be no wars or any kind of disturbances in any part of the world. At that time civil war took place in America in connection with the abolition of slavery and Abraham Lincoln became the President of USA. Finally slavery system was abolished and the country became peaceful.

Added to that the world was in rapid progress in agriculture. With these improvements some scholars believed the whole world would become slowly the Christian world.

In addition to that the golden millennial age is also at hand. The Zionism was to begin in Nineteen hundred AD which is responding to the call of Theodore Herzl. Many of the theologians could see the European Jews mixing with other Europe society. The Ottomans control of Israel and Palestine for about 750 years, without any change was worth to note. And also there is no sign of the scattered Jews of the world would join together in Israel.

According to the history all prophecies of the Bible became contradictory and might give an idea that the gentile nations would possess the land of Israel. It is quite conspicuous that even if European Jews were another hundred years with the hope, they would return to their home land. Israel appears to be impossible because they were already mixed with the European society and became part of it.

They might have undoubtedly mixed with that European society and settled there only never to return. So the opinion of many scholars, that replacement theology would be there historically for the Israel if they became European minded by mixing with them. If they do not understand the scripture and do some mistake, it is left to the discretion of God Almighty to look into their problem. In such circumstances, this replacement theology automatically discourages Christians to extend their moral support any longer to the Jews and Israel. Then naturally the world would understand that Israel had lost the authority of claiming their nation and the land. This pathetic situation might give scope to the neighboring nations (Muslim countries) to annex Israel as if it is no man's land.

Muslims invaded this small Israel nation during 7th century. Then the crusaders took it and kept under their control. If such position comes to that country again, it becomes poor and tourism may be discouraged. Not only that, if we look into the political conditions of Israel the terrorists who have been trying to wipe out that country from the world map by sending missiles from Gaza. This plan of terrorist attack also became another reason and causing perpetual tension and agony to Arab Christians and the Jews.

In such conditions the persons who had the same line of thinking like Bortner, must come collectively to the following conclusion – Israel must be denied any authority or entitlement on the land in their constant struggle against Muslims. One day these so called Muslims might occupy this land because of their population explosion and Israel would be left in the air as if they were nobody.

In the Bible there are certain passages which clearly point out God is not yet done with the Israel regarding their land or people.

Acts 1.6 – 8 : One of the disciples Peter asked Jesus one day, “Lord, will thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?”

To this question Jesus replied – It is not for you to know the time or reasons which the Lord hath put in His own power. But ye shall receive the power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you and ye shall be witness unto me in Jerusalem and in all Judah and in Samaria and unto the utmost parts of the earth.

Peter walked with Jesus for three years and learned many things from Him. Now let us come to the Israel who were going to be established. Let us try to grasp the meaning of this question. Some scholars had their own understanding that God did some thing to Israel forever. In the Bible it is said their fate would be decided upon in his own time. That is the Biblical hope. Jesus did not answer to peter, but reminded him, he had other things to do prior to that like preaching about Christ throughout the world as He was raised from the dead. Then He would restore Israel in His divine time.

In Romans 11.1-2, 11.11 – 12 : It is pointed out God has not done with Israel, and Jews though most of them bluntly refused to accept Christ as their king and Messiah.

In Zechariah 12.8 – 14 also said the same theory. In that day the Lord said, He would defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and he that is feeble among them at that time, (day) shall be as David and the house of David shall be as God as the angel of the Lord, before them. And it shall come to pass, in that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

And I will pour out upon the house of David and inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication. They shall look upon me whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for him as one mourned for his only son that is in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first born “——” . All the families that remain every family that apart their wives apart.

This passage was written about 536 BC, which some Jewish boys memorized in Hebrew language for their bar Mitzvah at the age of thirteen. We find in the 5th verse that many nations will attack Israel that on this occasion God will give them an unparalleled “divine victory”. But positive action could

not be taken in 70 AD, and 134 AD, when the Roman Emperors Titus and Hadrian destroyed Israel as a whole, Jerusalem city and Lords Temple in particular, perhaps it had to happen like that for the purpose of prophetic fulfillment. But the above said divine victory was achieved with military deliverance. God will pour His Spirit upon them and at last in faith, they shall look upon me whom they have pierced. Perhaps, this passage speaks about the time of the end.

Armageddon rescue of Israel might see many nations come together against Jerusalem. This attack fore sees the return of Jews and Israelites to their homeland. It was really hated and invaded by many nations, which had enmity with God. We must remember in this context, how God saved Israelites from their invaders. Those invaders were not at all committed or connected to the Israelites but they were the direct enemies to God. The mental set up of the Jews was such, that they were ready to face any amount of suffering but never tried to accept Christ as their Messiah. Yet God had soft corner for Jews and so wanted to save them from the clutches of their Muslim and other heathen and Antichrist nations. As they were God's direct enemies, He wanted to destroy them by Himself. If we look in to the Biblical history we can understand how much the Jews suffered for not accepting Christ as their Messiah and due to that they could not enjoy even the divine help. So, it could be a repentance with bitterness and done by the house of David the house of Nathan, the house of Levi and the family of Shimel. This is clearly spoken about Israelites but not of any church. Both David and Nathan died and after four hundred years came Zechariah and prophesied all these things.

In that day (Zechariah 13.1-2) there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for their sin and uncleanness. And it shall come to pass in that day saith the Lord of hosts that I shall cut off names of idols out of that land and they shall no more be remembered and also I will cause the prophets and unclean spirits to pass away out of that land.

These words are in continuation of the 12th chapter from the Book of Zechariah. As said Israel shall be cleansed en mass as and when they show their faith in Christ. And then they shall look upon me, when they show their faith in



Christ. And then they shall look upon me, whom they have pierced. This did not happen any more, and this was spoken here in the context of a delivered nation but not on the salvation of individual Jew. And this will happen, when the fact stands on that day on the mount of Olives, which is on the Eastern side of Jerusalem. In this connection let us study the prophesies of Zechariah, that the Messiah would come some day to the rescue of Israel who would be attacked, and after it is done He will stand upon the mount of Olives. On that day the place, Jesus preferred to pray to God, on this very mount of Olives.

Luke 1.32 – 33 He shall be great and shall be called, Son of the highest. And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

We all remember what God had promised to Abraham and the promise of Gabriel angel to virgin Mary before the birth of Jesus Christ, about two thousand years after Abraham. Among the promises God made to Abraham, the promise of allotting the land of Milk and Honey to his descendants was worth to note. The high priest Melchizedic gave the name Canaan to this land which later occupied by the children of Israel (Jacob) who was the grandson of Abraham. The sons of Jacob later became the twelve tribes of Israel. Abraham was called the father of faithful and God also liked him very much. So God said, He would bless those people who bless Abraham and He would curse those people who curse Abraham. These concluding lines would suffice to prove God's love towards Abraham.

## ENEMIES TO CHRISTIAN FAITH

The most interesting aspect of this phenomenon (impression) of a bit of truth and a great deal of fiction clubbed together in the context of suspense and thrills, that led millions of people to scratch their heads and wonder what goes on in this world. Under these strange circumstances, Christians must be ready to answer any type of questions because what “Dan Brown” has presented in his book “The Da Vinci Code”, appear to be just warmed heresies, and the theories of conspiracy and argument amounting to nothing. So Christians are warned to be ready always to answer unpredictable questions from pagans or unbelievers.

The writer Dan Brown has a wonderful skill in confusing the readers by these many contributions to the public. As a narrative author, he appears to confuse a lot of people. The characters he depicted in his works speak something nonsensical in regard to the Bible. For instance, one character speaks about the church where people do not believe in the divinity of Christ until 325 AD. He ignored the fact that even the most liberal Biblical scholars believed the Gospels, which clearly claim the deity of Christ.

These unbelievable stories were written in the first century AD, with these natures of attacks being quite common in those days. According to history at that time people have been living in different way of thinking without caring for God, though the word of God was available even to a common man. So. We can presume their life must have been like Pharisees who led their lives as hypocrites. Many people were invited to acquire spiritual knowledge instead to living the life of superficial Christians. But nobody came forward to honour this proposal as they indulged themselves in the sophisticated life of the day.

In such conditions they were unable to follow the real path of true Biblical Christianity. Even today millions and millions of people are unable to acquire basic knowledge about Bible and God because they did not find interest in it.

They don't find interest in possessing Biblical information. They don't know how they should live as true Christians and humbly obey God for salvation. The Biblical scholars are more worried regarding the future of so called Christians, then the teaching and preaching in the churches.

This critical situation gave scope to authorities to feel that church is in dangerous position. We find still some people who were well acquainted with Biblical knowledge. There is no doubt as some problem in all churches and in all Bible teaching universities. And in the churches some times the situation would go from bad to worse. It is not surprising if a large number of scholars and readers like the book called "The Davinci Code".

If they try to attack regular church goers who know very little the mode of counter attack with their Biblical knowledge to the arguments presented in the book "Davinci Code", their knowledge would not be sufficient for that purpose. The church attending members must be in a position to understand the method of counter attack along with enough Biblical matter, they can do anything and everything. This condition shows Christianity is in difficult situation. And this attack must be not on a particular doctrine of Christianity but on the fundamental principles of Christian faith itself.

The most amazing claim we can make in this post modern culture is that God has spoken in the old Testament especially in the Book of Deuteronomy wherein we are introduced to God, Who speaks with us and one of the greatest demonstrations is about "love" He showed upon us. He spoke to us so that we can genuinely know Him. Whenever we talk about the word of God, we must believe the word is true and fact before we read it. It was true before we read it. It will be true even after we die. This fact the believers must always keep in their minds.

It's truth is eternal and the truth is rooted in our own verification or in our personal affirmation for it is rooted in the very character of the existence of the God Almighty Who speaks with us when we are reading the scripture. We are not constructing truth but we are addressed and guided by truth. The "Dead

sea scrolls” are found in cumran caves in 1947 by a shepherd boy. They are in Hebrew language and the book of Isaiah was one of them.

Those scrolls at present are exhibited in the United states. They are the big attestation to the reliability of the scripture. In recent years a lot of attention has been paid to the archeological discoveries particularly to the Dead sea Scrolls. The scholars who were looking into the Biblical historical documents, like the book of Isaiah, found this as the same text, that virtually the concerned authorities are using the original manuscript of Isaiah as the fundamental text for the modern translation.

When we consider the fact we are looking at a writing which was about 2500 years old, and still we are using the same text as the basis for our modern translations with minor differences. This is the promise that God has presented His word.

According to The Davinci Code there are some other Gospels which appear to be more authentic than the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Every body will be surprised at this information, because all these days we have been considering only the above said four Gospels as authentic historical documents regarding the life of Jesus Christ from the earliest times. It should be a matter of great confidence to us that the early churches were led to realize very quickly the difference between the true witness and false witness.

The church could have that much responsibility in the early centuries and at the same time the church has fulfilled its duty increasingly well. Therefore when we have to encounter these “Gnostic” Gospels such as the Gospel of “Judah”, which was recently released by the “National Geographical Society”, we find these documents, what the early church said was not true to the congregation, or authentic or authoritative.

This new discovery put the Bible readers in utter confusion. We must see this as a great testimony to a fact that God has not only given us Bible for our regular reading but also we have regular guidance from the church in order to understand the true Gospel and the false Gospel.

A note worthy point we have to remember in this connection is that even the early churches and church goers used the same Gospels we are using today. These early writings had to be directly attributed to an apostle and then to be recognized as true and authentic, universally and through out the churches and finally in all denominations of the world. Added to that, churches have great confidence and knew who Jesus was on the basis of authoritative witnesses, that were written about Jesus in the Gospels.

Then, can we expect , cultural and spirituality transfiguration in a post modern world that which rejects any form of objective authoritative truth ?. Our opinions might be very few in our life's plan and in such a case, it is not as if to have the Bible as part – A and if it does not work we can move to plan – B, that is we have nothing beyond the Bible. We can plan, we are all by the grace of God and by His own design left with the Bible as our sole authority for our faith and true Christian living.

If the church suggests some other means of validating Christian message it means the church must be confusing the congregation as well as the world. At the end of Bible itself will show to be just as powerful in this generation as it has been any time in the past because it is God's living world – living and active and sharper than any two edged sword ( Hebrew 4.12). the task and authority of the church remains the same to teach and to preach the word of God.

The believers can understand the truth of scripture more perfectly than such, heresies in The Davinci Code. The Christians must dive deep into the cultural development that assured them. The Christian has all the responsibility to defend the truth of the word of God in the Bible under any circumstances before the neighbors. The Christian must be careful about the neighbors who try to put some unnecessary questions about the world of God or Christianity in order to defame God in the presence of unbelievers like those who reveal in The Davinci Code and believe what is said in it.

This novel The Davinci Code is also pictured by the Holy wood concerned people and undoubtedly Muslims, nations of both believers and non believers

must have witnessed it out of curiosity as it involved particularly the life of Jesus Christ. So some non – Christians or heathens may try to put some questions as what they saw in the movie.

As true believers, we must try our best to defend Jesus and the truth said about Him in the Gospels. Christians must speak before the unbelievers with humility at the same time with courage and clarify all their doubts about Christ as He revealed Himself in the Bible who he was. And finally as Christians we may be left with two choices – we must have strong belief with the Christ of Bible or we must have an imaginary Christ in our minds and then move forward according to our wish.

If the Bible is not our authoritative source to follow, then there is no other authoritative source to Christians and all of us to in crease our faith in God. How can we live in submission to the authority of God to honour and glorify Him ?. We are accountable to Biblical Christians to obey , to know, to study and to teach the world of God. We are accountable to every single truth that is clearly mentioned in the Bible.

We must not read the Bible just for reading sake, but to know the perfection of God. So while reading it we have to feel God is speaking with us directly. At that time, we must be very cautious because we are in the presence of God. Therefore, we must try to read the word God most reverently.

A true Christian must receive whole heartedly what God says, and then be thankful to Him because He loves us too much. He will take us out of darkness and guide us to walk in the light of the holy book to understand Him through that book. Heresy is always temporary but too dangerous. Some times it occurs and goes away on its own. Where as Christian faith is everlasting and more important.

The truth of Christian faith is not only eternal but transforming also. Heresy may be interesting to inquisitive minds. But Gospels would save humanity and transform them into saints and protect life out of death. They can have

everlasting life. The achievement of this salvation is more exiting and more exhilarating than heresy can offer to the people in the society.

Scripture is nothing but the breathing of God and it is useful for teaching, preaching, rebuking, correcting and turning into righteousness. We can find God's word as a guidance of life's challenge. So, true Christianity is nothing but fighting. The exact meaning of truth is that it implies vast quality of genuine religion hence genuine Christianity. Many people will be going to the churches every Sunday as Christians. They remain in the church record with that brand and die with the same. But we can count true Christians out of them.

Such people are called namesake Christians. We never see them fighting in support of their religion or spiritual fight. But some scholars say it is not the real Christian life according to the Bible. It is not that kind of religion Jesus founded or the Gospels preached. It is not that religion which produces Holiness. So the true Christianity is nothing but fighting. The true Christians are called believers and soldiers marching into the battle field . onward Christian soldier Marching as to war with the cross of Jesus Going on before.

The believers must behave as soldiers from the time of their conversion into Christianity until death. As believers we should not think about ourselves only. We must live for others also. That is fundamental principle of real Christianity. Some times we may have to spend sleepless nights either in meditation or in some noble work. As a rule the Bible suggests us to do something to others in our life. Then with whom a true Christian should fight ?. Who is his enemy ?. It is not with other Christian or with a pagan. The main fighting of the believer is with the world, with the flesh and with the devil. Unless we get victory over these three things, our other victories in this world are of colossal waste. If we are not fallen down. We must fight the battle continuously with more vigor, against the corrupt heart, against the busy devil and with the sinful world. Whether we win the battle or lose it, that must be our ultimate goal.

We must fight the flesh. Even after conversion the heart and mind of some people will be filled with devil and evil doings. But the heart of the believers

must be free from such imperfections in this material world. It is really pitiable thing to see our heart going astray. In such critical situations Jesus Christ bids us “watch and pray”(Mark 14.38). our spirit may be ready to leave all such things but the flesh is weak. Due to that there will be a constant struggle, there by we need daily prayer, which appears to be inevitable. “Apostle Paul said I despair my body and bring it into suggestion”. The true believers of Christ should have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires uninterrupted.

We must fight the world - The world is a beggar enemy to a true Christian, because there are many pleasurable things for a modern man to enjoy. Such things naturally cause hindrance in his progress. Man is said to be a bundle of desires. If one want is satisfied another want will be in its place. But these things we can circumvent with our daily prayers. Prayer conquers all our weaknesses. Our desires to have regular touch with the worldly things are our enemies, spirituality and block our way of life. These worldly things finally come in the way of our eternal advancement. So the first step a true believer has to take is to come out of such desires. If we are closely associated with them it means we are enemies to our merciful God.

In 1 John 2.15 it is said “if any one loves the world, the love of the father is not in Him” and in Romans 12.2, it is said, “Do not be conformed to this world”.

We must fight the devil - The first and foremost enemy to mankind is the devil (Satan). He has not yet died. Since the time the fall of both Adam and Eve, He has been trying to ruin the soul of men with his crooked plan. He always walks like a roaring lion to find some one to devour. He is an unseen enemy. He is always near to us, and moving around us. He is on our way, wherever we go. He is near our bed. He is like spy watching all our movements. He has been a liar from the beginning. His lying started first with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The only aim of the devil is to take revenge against God, he has been trying to take revenge against God’s creation (the people). In such conditions we need the guidance of our Almighty God, if we want to come out



of his clutches. A suitable passage is worth to note in this context from “Ephesus” . Only by watching and praying , fighting and putting on the whole armour of God.

True Christians are called to be soldiers of war and behave as such from the day of their conversion into Christianity, till the time of their death. We are not supposed to live the happy life religiously without any security. Some readers of this article might think that the statements are hard to digest. And it is clearly pointed out in scripture in the first book of Timothy 6.12. fight the good fight the faith, lay hold on eternal life. Therefore the Christian warfare is a non-stop warfare. It is not an ordinary one.

If we study the lives of the disciples of Jesus we can understand how miserably they were persecuted and killed by the Roman authorities . so, Christian life is not a bed of roses, but it is full of thorns. As real warriors we must put on the whole armour of God, so that we may be able to stand firmly and fight against the devil. We are not fighting against the flesh and blood but against principalities against power, against the rule of darkness of this age, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Only in such circumstances we must wear the whole armour of God, so that we may be able to with stand the evil day. As said in Ephesians 6.11- 13, withstand first in the faith be strong and be brave. If we meditate upon these above said Biblical examples, what strikes more to our minds is that they teach us one great moral lesson. Christianity is nothing but a struggle a fight and a warfare. The flesh and evil are enemies to God. So either we must fight the enemy the devil with the sword of the God or lose the battle. That is the ultimate result of a Christian.

The Davinci Code in Nutshell - This is a blatant (disapproved ) and Anti -Christ Novel written by Dan Brown. Yet it became very popular in the world and was called Block Buster Novel with 454 pages. Though the main theme appeared to be Anti – Christ, it won the flood of popularity and about 40 million copies were sold in the market and the Holly Wood authorities produced a picture also.

As mentioned in the book the main subject of the novel is treasure hunting in historic places and big cities. This treasure hunting is not for money or gold or any such thing. The search was for the Holy Grail ( a cup of bowl, supposed to have been used by Jesus Christ at the time of the last supper ).

In the middle ages it was believed that whoever will passes that Holy Grail cup have everlasting life because of the power that the cup has. That was one of the crusaders belief and this very cause prompted them to go to Jerusalem in search of that bowl many times during 12th and 13th centuries by holding cross in their hands. They tried their best to locate the cup but in vain.

It is also said in The Davinci Code that some people went in search of the Tomb of Mary Magdalene because it was believed the tomb contained some four or six chests or boxes full of papers with valuable information. These two incidents made the crusaders rest less at least for two centuries. And these two incidents location of the Holy Grail and the tomb of Mary Magdalene are the main stories in that novel. The Davinci Code.

It is also said the Roman Catholic Bishop of New York city planned to buy that Holy Grail for twenty Million dollars if it was found. And the pope of Vatican city tried his best to secure the secret information about the Holy Grail and finally the entire Roman catholic Mission tried tooth and nail to acquire the secret of that Holy Grail. And in conclusion the story appears to be only to degrade the Godliness of Jesus Christ.